THE DEFENCE OF PLEVNA

THE DEFENCE OF PLEVNA, 1877

First Edition, 1895
Reissue, Oct. 1911

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE CHRONICLES OF A VIRGIN FORTRESS
BYPATHS IN THE BALKANS
THE LAST OF BULGARIA'S BRIGANDS
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA
LEONORA
THE CORSAIR
CRITICAL REVIEWS OF HISTORICAL WORKS
ENGLISH PUNCTUATION

THE DEFENCE OF PLEVNA, 1877

WRITTEN BY ONE WHO
TOOK PART IN IT

BY
CAPTAIN FREDERICK WILLIAM VON HERBERT
("W. V. HERBERT")

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
GENERAL SIR JOHN D. P. FRENCH
G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G.

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO.
15 WATERLOO PLACE
1911

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" With copious slaughter all the fields are red,
And heap'd with growing mountains of the dead.
Had some brave chief this martial scene beheld,
By Pallas guarded through the dreadful field ;
Might darts be bid to turn their points away,
And swords around him innocently play ;
The war's whole art with wonder had he seen,
And counted heroes where he counted men.
So fought each host, with thirst of glory fired,
And crowds on crowds triumphantly expired."

HOMER'S "ILIAD" (POPE), BOOK IV.

"Though an enemy be an ant imagine he were an elephant."

TURKISH PROVERB.

INTRODUCTION

During the last year of the South African War, while directing the operations in Cape Colony, I found myself, late one afternoon in February, 1902, at the north end of the railway bridge over the Orange river at Bethulie, strangely attracted by the appearance of a well-constructed and cleverly hidden covered field work, which formed an important part of the "bridge head." Being somewhat pressed for time I rode on and directed my aide-de-camp to go down into the fort, look round it, and then catch me up. He shortly overtook me with an urgent request to return and inspect it myself. I did so, and was very much struck, not only with the construction of the work and its excellent siting, but also with all the defence arrangements at that point of the river. Whilst I was in the fort the officer in charge arrived and reported himself. Expressing my strong approval of all I had seen, I remarked that it brought back to my mind a book I had read and re-read, and indeed

studied with great care and assiduity—a book called "The Defence of Plevna," by a certain Lieutenant von Herbert, whom, to my regret, I had never met. "I am von Herbert, and I wrote the book you speak of," was the reply of the officer to whom I spoke.

The "Defence of Plevna" was given to me in 1895 by my old friend, the late Charles Williams, of the *Daily Chronicle*, whose experience of war, gained in seven campaigns, rendered him as fine a judge and critic of military operations as it is possible for any man who is not a professional soldier to become. He recommended me to read it attentively, and I followed his advice to the letter.

The book is well calculated to present to an imaginative mind a vivid and realistic picture of war. As a romance, it is in the highest degree enticing, and as a history it is interesting and accurate. But it is to the trained soldier—whether Regular or Territorial—the man who aspires in any capacity to lead men in war, that this account of the defence of Plevna should prove most valuable and instructive.

It brings home in the strongest manner to the trained mind the power and value of field works in modern war, and the almost invincible obstacles which they become in opposing an attack over open ground. If these lessons could be clearly evolved

from operations which took place thirty-four years ago, how much more striking must they be to the student of war as it is in 1911!

I have hitherto touched briefly upon what I consider to be the material lessons to be learnt from this book, but the moral truth it teaches is more important still. The great soldier who defended Plevna refused to acknowledge such a word as defeat. When things were at their worst his outward demeanour was calmest and most confident. There was no hysterical shrieking for supports or reinforcements. These might have reached him, but through treacherous jealousy he was betrayed and left to his own resources. In spite of this no thought of capitulation or retreat ever entered the mind of Osman Pasha, and his efforts to hold his ground were frustrated only when he fell wounded into the hands of the Russians, after personally leading the final great sortie.

When we consider that the Turkish general was opposed—among others—by no less intrepid a leader than Skobeleff, who personally led many of the assaults against Osman's entrenchments, we can well understand to what test the scientific attainments of this great leader and the valour of his troops were subjected.

Taking all these facts into consideration, and having regard to the vivid and realistic pictures which the Author (himself one of the defenders) has drawn of these great events, it cannot be denied that whether this book is read as a thrilling romance, or studied as an object-lesson in the art of war, it is a most valuable addition to military literature, and I heartily commend its close study to officers of all branches of the British military forces.

J. D. P. FRENCH.

HORSE GUARDS, WHITEHALL,
LONDON, S.W.
August 22, 1911.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

I MADE voluminous memoranda during the campaign, which were lost in the final holocaust of December 10, 1877, with the exception of one little note-book and a few sheets of memoranda which I happened to have about my person on the day of the sortie. . . . During my Russian captivity I rewrote much of that which I had lost, assisting my memory by conversations with fellow-prisoners. These notes form, next to actual recollection, the groundwork of my narrative.

* * * * *

It is the unavoidable consequence of the rank I held (lieutenant) that the horizon of my experience was limited. I was in the position of an observer of a painting who is placed with his nose almost touching the canvas. He cannot take in the grand total of the pictorial idea, but he will see each phase in all its details; thus he will probably perceive in the long run more than the man who confines himself to the broad outlines.

The disadvantage which falls on the inferior ranks in warfare, of being necessarily precluded from the range of its broader and more comprehensive aspects, is counterbalanced by the insight which they obtain

into the real, and horrible, side of campaigning. Rulers and statesmen, commanders-in-chief, and, to a certain extent, newspaper correspondents, see the ornamental fringe. I have witnessed much that was heroic, much that was grand, soul-stirring, sublime; but infinitely more of what was hideous and terrible. . . . I have seen unspeakable sights and inconceivable horrors. . . . If this volume should serve to dispel any illusions, if it should contribute a little towards the maintenance of peace, its purpose is fulfilled.

F. W. v. H.

London,
November, 1894.

NOTE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

It has been necessary to cut down considerably the original volume of 488 pages, in order to enable the publishers to issue the book at a popular price; but I have deleted no essentials, either in the military material or in the general narrative. The corrections and additions are the result of my journeys in the Near East in 1898, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1907, and 1908.

The first edition appeared in 1895. It has long been out of print.

F. W. v. H.

Shanklin,
September, 1911.

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THE DEFENCE OF PLEVNA

CHAPTER I

HOW I JOINED THE TURKS

February and March, 1877

My modesty shrinks from the task which the present narrative exacts, in which well-nigh every sentence will have to commence with the fatal word "I." However, I brace myself up with the maxim of Goethe: "Only curs are modest." If we are to believe his biographers, he acted fully up to this throughout life. I shall try to imitate his imposing example.

Though brought up in Germany, I am, on my father's side, of British descent. My grandfather fought at Waterloo. My mother was a French-born Huguenot. Thus, only one of my four grandparents was German. I am a British subject, and have had the honour to hold Her Majesty Queen Victoria's and His Majesty King Edward's commission, to fight the good fights of my country (rarely), to fill in the blue forms of my country (every day), in South Africa, 1899 to 1902.

This is a stage-aside: The clerical work I had to do as a Turkish infantry officer on active service

amounted, from first to last, to an aggregate of a few hours, say one in a thousand of my waking hours. The clerical work I had to do as a British infantry officer on active service amounted to sixty per cent. of my waking hours. Who was right, the Turk or the Briton?

I was seventeen years old when, on February 2, 1877, provided with ample means, a first-class outfit, and excellent introductions, I arrived in Constantinople, intent on offering my services to the Turkish nation in the imminent war with Russia. On March 27, 1877, I, then a second lieutenant in the Nizamié (regular) Infantry of the Ottoman Army, having charge of a detachment, left Constantinople by train for Bellova in East Roumelia, then the terminus of the Turkish railway system. This is the date, and this is the occurrence, with which the present record will open. Between those two dates I had been a private in barracks, had become a pupil in the war school at Pankaldi, had passed its final examination, and had obtained, on the same day, both my lieutenancy (at that time a warrant), and my first command. And thus far about myself at present.

Some information about the Turkish Army as it was in 1877, a year after the successful campaign in Servia, and just before the commencement of the fatal war with Russia and Roumania, is necessary for an intelligent interest in this volume. The picture here given is that of the Turkish Army as it appeared to me when I joined it. Many reforms and alterations have taken place since that date, and the following remarks have therefore none but a historical value.

Of the three principal arms, only the infantry and cavalry were under the War Office and the General Staff; the artillery had its own "Grand Master," and

its own administration. Of the auxiliary services, the engineers and the train and commissariat were under War Office and General Staff; the medical service had its separate administration and organisation. But train, commissariat, and medical services were practically non-existent in peace times, and were improvised when the need arose, were, indeed, paper institutions, like numerous other things in the Turkish Empire before the revolution of 1908. Under modern conditions these separate administrations have ceased.

The uniform of the Turkish infantry consists of a plain blue tunic, blue trousers tucked into the top-boots, a serviceable and really good great-coat of grey or dark blue hue, with a hood, which is drawn over the head in inclement weather, and the well-known red fez. The facings and shoulder-straps are red in the infantry, green with the Chasseurs (Tallié). The latter (corresponding to the German Jaeger of fifty years ago) are supposed to be sharpshooters and skirmishers; but there is little difference between their training and that of the ordinary infantry, except that each Chasseur battalion was supposed to have, but did not always possess, two light guns (system Whitworth), carried each on two packhorses.

The clothing was of good make and material, except the boots; these were execrable. I wore my own footgear.

The equipment consisted of a Martini-Peabody rifle (1800 metres) and sword-bayonet. Later in Plevna, the men had two bayonets each.

The outfit for service consisted of a pouch for eighty cartridges, a water-bottle, and a large canvas haversack, which had to hold everything that the owner was desirous of taking with him.

The cavalry uniform is like that of the infantry, except the headgear, which consists of a cap of sheepskin, called kalpak. The armament is a heavy sword, Winchester repeating carbine, and revolver. Lances are carried only by regiments belonging to the Guards. The horses were bad, and their supply was insufficient.

The Circassian irregular horsemen wore the fantastic national costume with which illustrated papers have acquainted the reader. They had the light guardless sword used by the Cossacks; all had carbines, many also lances, revolvers, and knives. They were better mounted than the regulars.

The artillery uniform is more ornamental than that of the infantry. The blue tunic is braided hussar fashion. The headgear is both the fez and the kalpak. The equipment consists of cavalry sword and revolver. The guns were of modern Krupp manufacture. The horses left much to be desired; often the live stock of a battery was incomplete. There are six guns to the battery. The ammunition carts, of which there should be six to the battery, were often deficient.

The train consisted of light carts, two- or four-wheeled, adapted to the mostly execrable roads of the country and to transport across the Balkans, drawn by oxen more often than by horses, and of packhorses, for which mules were sometimes substituted. There were eighteen packhorses and two carts to the battalion, viz. two horses per company for the spare ammunition (eight companies to the battalion), two horses for the officers' luggage, and the carts for tents, cooking utensils, and tools. The train soldiers are called arabaji, meaning "driver." An organised commissariat did not exist.

Of engineers I saw little or nothing. We had in

Plevna three companies of these, but most infantry battalions were their superiors in the art of military engineering.

Footgear excepted, nothing can be said against the clothing of the Osmanli soldier; it is good, plain, becoming, practical, serviceable, and inexpensive. But it has one grave drawback, which those in high places ignore obstinately: it offends national custom and prejudice; it is un-Turkish, save as regards the fez, labours under the stigma of being Frankish and Christian, and is disliked by the private. The popular beloved Turkish costume, consisting of short, open jacket, blouse, sash, ample breeches, and shoes with laced gaiters, is now allowed only to the Zouave regiments; in 1877 many infantry battalions were still clad in this dress.

The organisation of the Turkish Army recognises three classes of troops: Nizamié (active army, Nizamié proper, and 1st reserve, Ikhtihat), Redif (corresponding to the German Landwehr), and Mustafiz (territorial army, corresponding to the German Landsturm and the French Levée en masse). This classification does not include the countless unorganised hordes of Kurds, Circassians, and other irregulars. Of the Mustafiz I saw next to nothing during the campaign; I believe it had, early in 1877, hardly any existence, except on paper, certainly no organisation. The Nizamié and Redif battalions were mixed indiscriminately in the constitution of the tactical regiments and brigades. Some of the Redifs, all the Mustafiz, and most of the volunteer irregulars, and other auxiliaries were in 1877 armed with sniders (1200 metres). The Redifs are called out in three stages or bans. It is useless to speak of the periods and conditions of

service in each grade and ban, as during those troubled times things were invariably quite different in practice to what they looked on paper. To-day the whole Turkish Army has the latest Mauser rifle (2200 yards).

There is general conscription in Turkey, to which every Mahomedan is subject. Christians and Jews were not accepted as recruits, but have to pay a small tax for the privilege of exemption. Residents in Stamboul (with Galata and Skutari) are exempt from both service and tax; why, I do not know. The registers of the Moslem population are kept with exactitude.

During the war Turkey put 750,000 men into the field.

The following are the grades in the Turkish Army :—

Serdar ekrem (Commander-in-Chief).

Mushir (marshal), commanding ordu (army) or kol ordu (corps).

Ferik (general of division), commanding ferka (division).

Mirliva (brigadier), commanding liva (brigade).

Miralaï (colonel), commanding alaï (regiment).

Kaim-makam (lieutenant-colonel), adjutant to colonel.

Binbashi (major), commanding tabor (battalion).

Kol aghassi (vulgarly: Kolassi) (major's adjutant).

Yüzbashi (captain), commanding bölük (company, squadron) or tabiya (battery).

Mulazim evvel (first-lieutenant).

Mulazim zani (second-lieutenant).

Mulazim zalisé (third-lieutenant). This grade existed only in the engineers.

Bash chawush (sergeant-major); one to every battalion.

Chawush (sergeant).

Onbashi (corporal).

Nefer (private).

The three grades, mushir, ferik, and mirliva, carry with them the title " pasha," and correspond to the pashas of three, two, and one tails respectively of olden times.

Miralais and kaim-makams have the title " bey."

The kaim-makam is supposed to be an auxiliary to the colonel ; but most regiments had only one or the other of these officers, instead of both.

The Turks had (in 1877) two ranks unknown to Europeans : the Kiatib (clerk), with officer's rank, one to each battalion, and the Bölük emini (company clerk), with N.C.O. rank, one to each company. Not more than one-half of the battalions had clerks ; the clerical work was mostly done by the major or his adjutant. Very few captains had clerks ; often the captain's orderly did the clerical work of the company. Each battalion was supposed to have a physician (hekim), a surgeon (jerrah), and an apothecary (ejzaji) ; but no battalion had in my experience more than one of these ; many had none. These three officials are called by the general name tabib, meaning medical man. There were three to five chaplains (imam) to a brigade ; they did not seem to be attached to any particular unit, but shifted as they listed ; most of them were brave, sturdy, estimable men. From first to last I never saw any veterinary surgeons (baitar zabit) ; the veterinary work was done, and done well, by the farriers (na'alband) and the N.C.O.'s generally.

The modern Bölük emini corresponds to our quartermaster-sergeant.

Remarkable features of the Ottoman Army are the constant non-payment—in war and peace alike—of

the officers' wages, the forbearance and mildness with which this terrible drawback is borne, the undeniable fact that it does not influence the officers' *morale* and efficiency.

On paper the Empire is divided into six vilayets (*i.e.* countries), which provide each an ordu (army), consisting of four kol ordus (corps). In reality, no vilayet supplied in 1877 more than three corps, some only two, or one; the Bagdad vilayet sent a single division, and that only towards the end of the campaign.

The kol ordu is supposed to consist of two divisions = four brigades = eight regiments = twenty-four battalions. There were no independent cavalry divisions; often there was no corps artillery. The actual subdivisions differed nearly always from those on paper.

In 1885 the kol ordu was abolished. There is now no unit between the ordu (army) and the ferka (division).

The administrative and tactical unit was the battalion, not the regiment. For administrative purposes three battalions are formed into a regiment; but the tactical formation of a regiment was arbitrary, differed nearly always from the administrative one, and was often changed from one *ordre de bataille* to another. Thus the colonelcy had no real tactical value. The major was the fountain-head, the source, the authority.

The absence of any distinctive numeration of the regiments in 1877 was a grave inconvenience. Speaking of a battalion, you would have to say "Second Regiment of First Army, Battalion Redif of (say) Gallipoli No. 2." I have throughout introduced running regimental numbers of my own. In 1878 a consecutive numbering of regiments, similar to that of the German Army, was adopted.

The army which Osman had in Plevna comprised battalions belonging administratively to half a dozen or more corps. Sometimes the three battalions of a (tactical) regiment would belong administratively to three different corps.

The words binbashi (major), yüzbashi (captain), onbashi (corporal) mean, literally, 1000 head, 100 head, 10 head respectively. Originally the battalion consisted of 1000 men, divided into ten companies, the company being subdivided into ten squads. The war strength of the battalion was subsequently reduced to 800 men, divided into eight companies.

In my experience, the full strength of 800 men to the battalion was never reached. Many battalions counted, even at the commencement of hostilities, only 400 to 500 men ; the average strength was 600. This would give to the company the ridiculous figure of fifty to eighty men.

The evil had been recognised by the authorities, and the redivision of a few battalions into four companies of nominally 200, actually 150, men each had been made by way of trial. Since the war this sensible subdivision has been generally introduced ; but I believe that for some years (between 1885 and 1898) the subdivision into six companies was tried in many battalions and found wanting.

The old companies of (nominally) 100 men had two lieutenants, two sergeants, and two corporals each. The new companies of (nominally) 200 men had either three or four men of each of these grades. The number of non-commissioned officers was thus too small. The battalion to which I belonged throughout the Plevna campaign had four companies of (originally) 160 to 180 men each.

There are two distinct and separate classes of officers in the Ottoman Army: firstly, Mekteblis, *i.e.* Scholars,* who have been educated in one or more of the forty Military Colleges of the Empire (all free) and, having passed an examination, enter, without practical training, as second Lieutenant; secondly, Alaïlis, *i.e.* Rankers, who have advanced from the ranks, without theoretical, often without the most elementary general, education. In 1877, twenty per cent. of all officers were Mekteblis; since then the proportion has steadily grown and is now (1911) sixty per cent.

To conclude my remarks upon the Ottoman Army in general, I can sum up my experience of the performances of the Turkish troops in 1877 as follows: The artillery was splendid (despite the bad supply of horses), the infantry very good, the regular cavalry mediocre (apart from the fact that it was insufficient in numbers), the irregular, on the whole, useless. Train, commissariat, sanitary service, engineers, &c., were either absent altogether or bad. The supreme command in the capital was abominable. Since 1877 this has changed. The modern Turkish artillery is only mediocre, the infantry is splendid, perhaps the best in Europe; the cavalry is and remains inferior. My experience of the Russians is that their infantry was very good, their artillery mediocre, their cavalry bad and useless, Cossacks excepted, who were excellent, save for their love of pillage and outrage.

The Turkish Army is, perhaps, the only one in the world which has invariably, and notably in the cam-

* The Turkish plural is Mektebliler, "ler" or "lar" being the plural termination. I have throughout employed the English "s" when using Turkish or Arabic nouns in the plural. I may here remark that in Turkish the stress is always on the last syllable.

paign under discussion, behaved better in the field than the peace conditions of both nation and army led critics to anticipate. The Russian Army belongs undoubtedly to the category of armies which have not fulfilled expectations. These plain facts should be borne in mind when the next campaign becomes imminent.

And now we must return to the undeserving hero of this narrative, that is, to myself, whom we left, in the evening of March 27, in a train steaming out of Constantinople, the proud leader of two lieutenants as youthful and inexperienced as himself, one sergeant, six or eight corporals, and 170 to 180 men, every one of them wiser and worthier, most of them older, than the three conceited and callow youngsters who were supposed to guide and teach them.

CHAPTER II

FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO WIDDIN: THREE WEEKS ON THE TRAMP

March 27 *to April* 23, 1877

The train passed the now historic San Stefano, where peace was signed a year later (on March 3, 1878), and pulled up at 7.30 in Kütchük Chekmedjé (the name means: small chest of drawers), twelve miles west of Constantinople. Here our three cars were detached and shunted to a siding, ready to be joined next morning to the Adrianople through train.

Thanks to the zeal of an innkeeper and to the patriotism of prominent citizens, the men had supper of bread, cakes, and coffee, whilst the Austrian station-master placed his room at the disposal of us three officers, a hot meal being sent us from the khan (inn). I refused to grant leave of absence, and at nine the men turned in. They slept on sacking provided by the railway officials, with their haversacks for pillows and covered with their great-coats, on the floor of an empty carriage-shed, where a fire had been lighted, for it was damp and chilly. After having held muster, I placed the detachment under Sergeant Sefi, and went for a stroll, in a drizzling rain, accompanied by

Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb. At the khan we bespoke breakfast. We did not stop out long, for we discovered nothing but a mean, uninteresting, dripping, indescribably dirty townlet with apparently more canine than human inhabitants.

At ten we turned in, and sat for an hour around the stove in the station office, talking and smoking. As my companions were my friends and co-sharers of good and evil throughout the campaign until death parted us, I shall briefly introduce them. They sleep under the soil of Plevna's blood-soaked hills, in company with 30,000 other victims of Russia's furious onslaughts and Osman's heroic defence.

Jack Seymour's antecedents were sad and troubled. There is no need to detail them. Suffice it to say that he hailed from Gallipoli, and that his father was English. He spoke Turkish like a native. The religious difficulties of his entry into the Ottoman Army were overcome in his case more easily than in mine, owing to the stepfather's local and personal influence. He had chosen the career of a soldier in conformity with his inclinations; he had passed the War School in Pankaldi in October, 1876, and had since been attached in Tash Kishla Barracks, in Constantinople, as kiatib (clerk) to a major, afterwards as yaver (aide-de-camp) to a ferik. Why I was placed above him, then as well as later in Widdin, I do not know, as he was six months my senior in point of service; but seniority counts for nothing in the Turkish Army, and I was a month older than he. In any case, I had no hand in the arrangement, and he accepted it without grumbling or questioning its propriety. He was of average height, slim, with a handsome boyish face and bright grey eyes. His fighting weight was 9 stone 4 lb. He was

full of dash, as brave as a lion, as true as steel, and a staunch and loyal friend.

Ibrahim Tereb hailed from Dédé Agach, a port on the Ægean Sea and terminus of a branch line from Adrianople, where his father was a Government official. He had passed the War School on the same day as Jack, and had been selected to train for the General Staff in the Staff College, where he had stayed until a week previous to our meeting, when he had been politely informed that he was not suited for a General Staff officer, and had been sent to the Daüd Pasha camp on the western outskirts of Stamboul. I suppose he was not considered sufficiently bright. It was a sore point with the poor boy; whenever it was referred to he flew into a violent passion. It goes without saying that he was teased unmercifully with this mishap. He was an inch shorter, but stouter, than Jack and I (who were nearly alike in height and weight), and had typical Turkish features, with magnificent black eyes and the much-cultivated attempt at a moustache, which formed the constantly irritating object of Jack's and my envy, our faces being as smooth as any girl's. In the absence of cosmetics he used to grease his upper lip with mutton-fat at night; when there was no fat, with a candle-stump. He was a splendid swordsman. His courage, prowess, zeal, and powers of endurance left nothing to be desired. He was an enthusiastic, romantic, and earnest young fellow, and had some high notions as regards religion, morality, friendship, love, marriage, and so forth.

Being engaged in personalities, I shall seize this opportunity of saying a word with respect to Sergeant Sefi. This man had a history—which I learnt on the following day—as curious as any I ever heard. I

reproduce it as he gave it to me. He was an Englishman by birth (of this I am certain, as I could judge by the accent), and had held a high position in a town in Syria, having finally become British Consul, or possibly Vice Consul. While holding this position he had been mixed up in a financial scandal, and had been obliged, ten or twelve years before, to fly in order to escape arrest, leaving wife and child behind; these he never saw again, for a year later they fell victims to the cholera. His perfect knowledge of both Turkish and Arabic and his sun-tanned face enabled him to pass as a Moslem; I, for one, was thunderstruck when he disclosed himself to me as an Englishman. He had enlisted, had risen to the rank of sergeant, and had fought in Servia. We separated in Widdin, whence he was sent to Rahova, and I have not seen him again; but I had a letter from him later in Kharkoff, written in Odessa, giving an account of his campaigning adventures, and stating that he had been promoted to the rank of bash chawush, and had been taken prisoner after the battle of Shainovo (Shipka), January 9, 1878; my address in Kharkoff he had obtained from a German railway official in the Russian service. I have not heard from him again. His English names I have never learnt.

At five next morning (March 28) we were up. I held muster, and sent the men to the khan for breakfast, which consisted of coffee and newly baked bread. The day was threatening and oppressive; later it became intolerably close, and showers fell at intervals. Some residents dealt out home-made cakes and tobacco. Jack, Ibrahim, and I stood apart whilst the distribution was in progress, as our rank forbade our sharing in it; but a veiled girl came up to us with her father, and

offered to each of us a packet of cigarettes and some cakes. We saluted and thanked her; Jack seized her hand and kissed it, with more fervour than it was wise or necessary to display. But the grizzly old Turk only laughed, as if to say, 'Boys will be boys.' Encouraged by Jack's successful boldness I, too, kissed her pretty hand; but when Tereb proceeded to follow suit the old man marched his girl off, and poor Ibrahim, who looked very sheepish, got nothing but a hearty laugh for his abortive gallantry.

At eight, the train, consisting, besides the carriages for the ordinary traffic, of a dozen cars filled with soldiers, drawn by two engines, steamed into the station, and there was much commotion: for a lot of the men jumped out. I noticed a major, and drew his attention to the khan; he sent some of his men, who returned with the host's remaining stock of bread. Meanwhile our three cars were attached; we took our places, I counted the men, and off we went, exchanging farewells with those on the platform.

Considerations of space preclude me from describing the beautiful scenery through which we passed. We arrived in Adrianople at eight that night, after a twelve hours' journey which, if devoid of mishaps, was full of discomfort. We had no regular meals: our biscuits, cakes, water, and occasional doles from charitably inclined persons on the platforms, were our sustenance. There was an hour's delay in one station—I think it was Liulé Burgas; but nothing was to be had there save coffee and milk. From this place we telegraphed to the Military Governor of Adrianople, asking for night-quarters, supper, and breakfast for 900 men.

In Adrianople we had twelve hours to wait for the

departure of the Bellova train. We were met by a corporal, who marched us through the ill-lighted, muddy streets to the barracks, where things had been made comfortable: fires were burning in the stoves—it had turned cold at dusk—and a hot supper, consisting of mutton and rice boiled together, a goodly portion for each man, with two loaves per head, had been prepared. Biscuits were dealt out for the morrow's journey.

The barracks were full, and there was no bed accommodation for us, it having been the commander's intention to send us to the camp outside the town; but rain had set in, and we were allowed to remain, our 900 men sleeping, as best they could, on the floors of the corridors, dormitories, stables, and outhouses, wrapped up in their great-coats, with one blanket per man to lie on.

My 180 men were accommodated in a large outlying hall, used for drill in bad weather. I called the roll, saw them settled in their sleeping-places on the sand-covered floor, and left them in charge of Sergeant Sefi.

The 700 men who had joined us in Kütchük Chekmedjé were commanded by a major. Not being under the latter's orders (on the contrary, I had been told that my command was an independent one), I had really nothing to do with him; but he suggested that I should place myself under him for the rest of the journey to Bellova, as it would facilitate railway and food arrangements; which I did, after consulting Seymour and Tereb.

Jack and I accompanied the major, two of his lieutenants, and an officer of the garrison to the station, where seventeen cars were bespoken for the

next morning. Then we called at the private house of the Governor, to whom the major and I were in duty bound to report ourselves. He had gone to bed, so we left our names with a servant. It rained hard, and I saw Adrianople, therefore, under unfavourable conditions, apart from the darkness ; this may account for the fact that the city appeared to me remarkably dirty, dingy, and miserable.

On our return to barracks we were invited to a common-room used by the local officers ; here we had coffee and tobacco, and spent a social hour. Much consideration was shown to Jack and me by the hospitable Adrianople men ; Tereb also, as well as the major and his subordinates (he had two captains and ten lieutenants under him), came in for a share of the goodly things, of the warmth diffused by the stove, of the friendliness of our hosts. We were envied for our orders to proceed to Widdin, whither also the major and his force were bound.

Jack, Ibrahim, I, and three lieutenants from the major's detachment slept, on two beds and a couch evacuated by our amiable hosts, in one of the officers' bedrooms.

We turned in after midnight, and were up again at six (March 29), amid indescribable bustle ; for the building held three times its allotted number of men. Breakfast consisted of coffee and bread. Muster was held, the flasks were refilled, and off we marched, after having taken a hearty farewell of our kindly hosts. It had cleared, the sun shone brilliantly, and soon it grew quite warm. The filth in the streets was awful ; but the sunlight made things look bright and cheerful.

In the station there was a large concourse of inhabitants, the report of our departure to the probable

seat of war having spread through the town. Again we came in for voluntary distributions of bread, cakes, sweets, oranges, dates, tobacco, and cigarettes.

There was less crowding in the train than on the previous day, as we had an extra car for the men and a first-class carriage for the officers. The train, consisting of thirty cars, was divided into two portions, each drawn by two engines.

The scenery, beautiful throughout, grew more hilly as we progressed; but two or three stations before Philippopolis it became flat, with a view of mountain-ranges on the horizon. We had only short stoppages until, at seven in the evening, we reached Philippopolis. The major had sent a telegraphic request for supper to this town, and another for quarters to Bellova. The meal, consisting of boiled rice, served hot in enamelled tin dishes, with two loaves per head, had been sent from the barracks to the station in carts, in charge of local soldiers; it was consumed by the men on the platform, in the waiting-rooms and offices, and in the adjoining sheds. Perfect order and good temper prevailed: there was no crowding and pushing, no greediness, and no unseemly haste. Bonfires were burning in different places, for the lighting arrangements at the station were of a primitive description. It was an animated and picturesque scene. I found it hard to realise that we were as yet in perfect peace, for the ugly word "war" was writ large on every countenance, and appeared in every detail of the weird and romantic surroundings.

I saw nothing of Philippopolis except the station, and that only in the growing darkness.

The officers of the garrison arrived to greet us, brought us cigarettes, and had coffee made on one of

the fires. We squatted around it, chatting and laughing, in the highest of spirits ; and thus, still at peace with all the world, I had a foretaste of camp-life.

The sky was overcast and threatening.

After an hour's stoppage we proceeded on our journey. The night withdrew the details of the scenery from my vision ; but I noticed, as we approached our destination, that it was weird and desolate. We had two short stoppages, the first of which was at Tatar Bazardjik, one of the hotbeds of the rebellion of 1876 ; and at half-past ten we arrived in Bellova, which is a village of under 1000 inhabitants, on the Maritza, amid magnificent forests ; at the present time it is an insignificant intermediary station on the Great Balkan Line, then it was the all-important terminus.

In the dark, ill-built station I dissolved my connection with the major, owing to a difference of opinion between us, though with good temper on either side : he preferred to march with his men to the camp, half an hour's walk, relying upon the telegram he had sent ; I chose to remain in the station till daybreak, for it looked threatening, the roads (so I was told) were in an awful condition, and I was by no means certain as to the accommodation we should find in the already crowded camp. In deciding thus I acted upon the advice of a friendly German railway engineer. Here in the station we had in any case a roof overhead, as there were numerous sheds for carriages, tools, stores, &c. Having expressly been told to proceed to Bellova independently of any detachments I might meet on the road, I was correct in acting on my own discretion.

I parted from the major and his officers with perfect

friendliness, and watched the column march out into the dark, boisterous night, some railwaymen with lanterns acting as guides. Soon it began to rain; but I learnt afterwards that the troops escaped the deluge which came down at midnight, although the crowding in the tents was terrible.

We were under shelter when the storm commenced. Having held muster and seen my men safely housed, Jack, Ibrahim, and I nibbled some biscuits, drank brandy diluted with water (of this compound the Turk did not partake), and, huddling together on the floor, were soon asleep, despite the howling wind and the terrific rain, which almost beat in the roof of the roughly built shed.

I had appointed seven as the time of rising. When we got up (March 30) the sun was shining in all its glory, displaying to our view a landscape of great beauty. The wind was still very high, and continued so for some days, which had the effect of drying the roads. From this moment till September we had almost invariably fine weather.

The scenery around Bellova is magnificent. The village lies at the northern foot of the wild Rhodopé mountain-range, of which the highest summits, 8000 feet above sea-level, are twenty miles to the south-west. North of the town the southern slopes of the Balkans rise from the banks of the Maritza. Bellova thus forms the extreme western point of the Maritza plain, the point in which the northern and southern mountain-ranges (Balkan and Rhodopé) meet at an acute angle.

The Rhodopé Mountains (called Dospad Dagh by the Turks) are (or were in 1877 and up to a few years ago) infested with robbers.

We breakfasted on biscuits and water: there was

nothing else to be had. I left the detachment in charge of Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb, with instructions to make the men look smart, so that we might creditably pass the brigadier's inspection, and walked along the high-road to the camp, which was close to the village, two miles west of the station. Here I reported myself to Pardo Pasha. I am not certain that I remember the name rightly. Jack Seymour called him (behind his back) "Parrot Pasha." I believe Pardo was a half-caste Italian.

The camp held 1000 men (not counting the major's 700), most of them under canvas; there were also some roughly built sheds for stores, carts, and four heavy batteries, but no cavalry, except a detachment of Circassians, who struck me as being remarkably repulsive. Fresh sheds were in course of erection, timber being plentiful in the neighbourhood, and there being at that time a number of workmen in Bellova, many of them foreigners: Greeks, Dalmatians, Italians, Croatians, Servians, Poles, Hungarians, Ruthenians.

The brigadier instructed me to remain in the station with my detachment, in order to supervise and assist in the unloading and housing of stores. He expected another 1000 infantry, as well as a large train, the former from Constantinople, the latter from Philippopolis. After their arrival we were to start for Sofia, where detachments would join us.

I went back to my men, and took them to camp, where the brigadier inspected them. The ordinary daily ration of mutton, rice, and bread was dealt out to us. We marched back, taking with us handcarts with 1000 biscuit rations, as well as soap, candles, matches, oil and salt. I had dinner prepared, selecting

those men as cooks who professed to be able to fulfil this important duty.

The brigadier had informed me that he had decided to leave me in command (to terminate in Widdin) of my detachment; for which compliment I expressed my gratitude. Twenty Redifmen with one corporal, who had arrived by themselves on foot from Saloniki a few days before, were added to my command, so that I had now 200 men, four non-commissioned officers, and two lieutenants under me. These formed a march company —*i.e.* a temporary or scratch company.

There was a large stock of every necessary in Bellova, but the accommodation for storing was bad and insufficient.

With the consent of the stationmaster, I appropriated a shed sufficiently large to afford accommodation to all my men, and a smaller building for my company's carts and stores. Several new sheds, for the trains expected to arrive, were commenced by the railway workmen. We three lieutenants utilised an empty cottage in the village of Simtchina, half a mile south-west of the station. The inhabitants of Simtchina were induced to lend furniture and bedding, and we made one room of the tiny, pretty dwelling quite homely and comfortable.

With these arrangements the day was spent. Supper consisted of biscuits, and milk bought in Simtchina. Good spring water was plentiful in the vicinity. I made the men turn in at nine, except Sergeant Sefi and a dozen Redifs, who were detailed to give assistance on the arrival of the train. This brought only a small detachment—fifty men, under a lieutenant—but a large quantity of stores, which were housed in and near the station. The new arrivals

slept in one of the sheds, the lieutenant, at our invitation, in the cottage. A notability of the village sent coffee, pipes, and tobacco for us four officers, and Jack bribed a charming Bulgarian girl, with more kisses than piastres, to tidy up.

Next day (March 31), in camp, a colonel, Mahomed Hussein Bey by name, gave me detailed instructions as to the preparations for our journey.

Firstly, there was a medical inspection of the men on the part of a surgeon attached to Pardo Pasha's staff, who was assisted by some doctors (civilians) from Philippopolis. Four of the Saloniki Redifmen were found to suffer from soreness of the feet, and were told to remain behind, much to their disgust. I absolved them from any but the lightest duties, had an ointment made of mutton-fat, borrowed slippers from the inhabitants, and two men recovered sufficiently to join us after all; the other two, together with fifty men and two corporals from the camp, under a lieutenant, all suffering slightly from something or other, were formed into a "company of weaklings," and were commanded to take charge of the empty camp after our departure.

Secondly, there was an inspection of footgear by me, assisted by Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb and Sergeant Sefi. I knew nothing about boots, except how to wear them; but necessity teaches better than theoretical training. Most of the men had been but recently provided with clothing; I had, therefore, only a dozen pairs to throw out, which were replaced out of a large supply just arrived from Philippopolis.

Thirdly, the great-coats underwent a thorough examination. Here I had reason to be dissatisfied with the Redifs from Saloniki, who had ill-used their clothing

during their tramp, so that I had to get them fresh coats. By the way, these men had been destined for Sofia, but had gone to Bellova through mistaking their directions.

Fourthly, to each man were given two pairs of woollen socks, a large cotton handkerchief, a towel, and a thick muffler—for the nights were chilly, and there was snow on the summits of the Rhodopé and the Balkans.

These preparations lasted several days. In the meantime our ordinary duties went on as usual: we marched to camp in the morning with our carts, leaving sentries in charge of the stores, took over our day's rations, marched back, cooked dinner, had twice daily ablutions in a tributary of the Maritza, and an occasional bath in the Maritza itself, a mile distant, washed our underclothing in turns, and at night a detachment assisted in unloading the train.

Stores and troops arrived daily: infantry, a light horse-battery, an ordinary battery, a squadron of regulars, a detachment of workmen. Special trains brought some hundreds of packhorses. Special local trains from Tatar Bazardjik brought meat, grain, vegetables, forage. Carts and waggons of the latter commodity arrived hourly from the surrounding villages. The greatest bother was caused by herds of sheep and oxen for our sustenance. Light vehicles were requisitioned in the farms and villages, the owners receiving acknowledgments. Consignments of horseshoes came from Adrianople; cases of small-arms from Constantinople, and two iron boxes with money in charge of an officer and two privates. I received five liras against expenses from Pardo Pasha's aide-de-camp, after having rendered an account for

three liras which had been paid to me in Constantinople. Ammunition supplies were troublesome, as they required special care in housing and extra sentries. Drugs and medicines came from Philippopolis.

Altogether we were so busy that I found no time to write home; I had written last from the War School after the examination. The brigadier sent me orders, notes, and summonses at all hours of the day and night; one day I tramped six times to and fro. I had the satisfaction to be complimented by him, and by others, on the way in which I managed things at the station. We got terribly overcrowded and uncomfortable: men slept in the waiting-room, in the office, on the platform, in the cars, in the signal-box, and our own cottage sheltered a dozen officers besides ourselves. The Bulgarian maiden had enough to do. If kisses and compliments were coin of the country she would have been amply paid.

At noon on April 3 (as nearly as I can judge from fragmentary notes and at this distance of time) I received my final instructions for the break-up on the morrow. The loading of the carts with the stores occupied us till darkness.

The column consisted of 3000 infantry, two heavy batteries (destined for Sofia), one ordinary and one light horse-battery, with twelve artillery ammunition waggons, one squadron of regulars, and fifty Circassians. We had charge of 500 light carts, drawn mostly by oxen, 100 head of cattle, and 400 packhorses, 200 of which carried ammunition, the rest victuals. I had for my company four packhorses for the biscuits, &c., and a cart for the cooking utensils, officers' luggage, spare blankets, and digging tools. We carried no tents.

The infantry was divided into two march regiments, each regiment consisting of three march battalions, each battalion of from three to five march companies. The strength of the companies varied between fifty and 200 men; most of them were commanded by lieutenants. These tactical formations were only temporary, and were dissolved in Widdin. Pardo Pasha was the commander of the column.

At daybreak on April 4 we started, in glorious weather. The cavalry was in front; then came one of the infantry regiments, then the artillery and the train, lastly the second regiment. Turkish peasants acted as drovers. They treated the animals with remarkable kindness. Among the drovers were two men who were reported to be notorious Rhodopé robbers; they looked it, although they affected a meek and mild demeanour. The Circassians formed the van of the column, acting as guides and pioneers, and fixing upon cooking and sleeping places.

I have no recollection or notes of our stages. The distance from Bellova to Sofia is sixty-five miles by road, fifty as the crow flies. We accomplished it in six days, doing thus an average of eleven miles a day, which was not too great an exertion; though it must be borne in mind that our journey lay through mountainous country, that the Turkish roads are notoriously bad, that it had rained up to the day of our arrival in Bellova, and that we were travelling with guns, carts, and cattle. Sometimes we could make no more than a mile an hour, owing to the steepness and bad condition of the track. The principal places on the road are Banya and Samakov, each under 5000 inhabitants; the district is sparsely populated. The infantry did not pass through Samakov, but cut off a piece of the

road by means of a footpath. The scenery is lovely, particularly during the first stage, where the road leads along and through the glorious forests of the Rhodopé range. The weather was fine, but chilly at night; no rain fell.

We slept in the open air, lighting fires, which were kept burning throughout the night by the sentries who guarded the carts; rolled ourselves up in our blankets and great-coats, huddled close to one another, had our haversacks for pillows and the starlit sky for a roof, and slept the sleep of the just, the young and the exhausted—which means that we each and all slept remarkably well.

Three or four of my men became footsore, and had to be accommodated on carts; one was so exhausted that we had to leave him behind in Banya. I found that rubbing the feet with melted mutton-fat of the uncooked joints at night, and again before starting, prevented soreness. I took care that my men washed their feet when we passed a stream, generally twice a day.

Each company commander was left much to his own devices. As on arrival in Widdin I had the smallest proportion of invalids in the column (4 per cent., including footsore men, whilst some companies had 10 per cent.), I am justified in saying that I managed tolerably well. The column was drawn out so long—the distance between head and tail being five miles on the road—that during the tramp itself it was impossible to obtain instructions from the superiors; I was therefore constantly called upon to decide and act on my own judgment. The result was, that whereas I had left Constantinople as a boy, I arrived in Widdin a man.

The medical men from Philippopolis had returned

thither ; we had therefore only one surgeon, who used to travel up and down the column on horseback, and made up in zeal and earnestness what he lacked in skill. Not being always at hand, he could not be called at a moment's notice ; thus I had frequently to act as medical adviser to the company.

Stragglers I did not allow. When a man showed signs of fatigue, his rifle and haversack were taken away from him, and his belt was unstrapped ; if he did not recover, he was accommodated on a cart for an hour or two ; the shaking revived such cases wonderfully. Often I made a man swallow a drop of brandy, of which commodity Jack, Sefi, and I purchased a quantity of a Jew in Banya at an exorbitant price. I said that at home I was a hekim (doctor), and that this was my universal medicine.

We had three meals a day : coffee and biscuits for breakfast, hot meat for dinner, cold meat and biscuits for supper. When we passed through a town or village we bought milk, bread, or whatever victuals the inhabitants might have in stock. I found I had to pay cash, as my acknowledgments, being drafts on the Ottoman Government, were mistrusted. My five liras were spent when we reached Sofia ; here I obtained five more from Pardo Pasha's adjutant. The Jews were always willing to sell, and invariably cheated us ; the Turks gave us tobacco and bread gratis ; but the farther north we went, the more Christian did the population grow, and there was nothing to be got out of the Christians save black looks and (I doubt not) silent curses.

The roads were mostly bad, frequently abominable, often so narrow that two carts could not have passed each other. Occasionally there was for a short stretch

a spasmodic attempt at a grand high-road, one of Midhat Pasha's creations; then for a mile or so we walked as comfortably as we might have done in a rich English county; but the effort soon died away into general Ottoman slovenliness and impecuniosity.

The artillery was much troubled with the heavy ordnance; often we lent a hand with the guns and ammunition carts.

Then, as throughout the campaign, no maps were dealt out to us officers. Some, like myself, had their own maps, generally Austrian publications. I never saw a Turkish map; probably none existed. The commanders and staffs were, I believe, well supplied with maps and plans of foreign make.

The men were in good spirits, the discipline was excellent, and during the entire journey from Bellova to Widdin I had no more than ten or twelve occasions to utter a reprimand, not one to make a formal complaint. I detected no instances of feigning illness or exhaustion. There was not a single case of marauding in the column.

Towards dusk on April 9 we came in sight of Sofia, which lies in a superb position in the centre of a fertile plain studded with villages and bordered by gruesome-looking mountain-ranges on all sides.

At the present day Sofia is the capital of United Bulgaria; then it was the chief town of a Turkish province. It had 14,000 (now 80,000) inhabitants.

There were several camps in the neighbourhood, one of which accommodated us for a day, devoted to rest. On that day I obtained leave, called at the house of a European to whom I had an introduction, borrowed civilian garb, and went secretly to the grand old St. Sofia Cathedral, already deserted then, I believe, but

not yet in ruins, as it is to-day. There, on my knees, I implored God's help in the forthcoming ordeal. Thirty thousand men, better than I, died in that ordeal; I lived to tell the tale.

At daybreak on April 11 we started, our column having been joined by another march regiment of two battalions, as well as four batteries and a large additional train. We had all in all 5000 men, thirty guns, eighteen artillery ammunition waggons, 800 carts, 800 packhorses, and 500 head of cattle.

The distance from Sofia to Widdin is 100 miles as the crow flies, but owing to a bend of the road the route is increased to 140 miles. The journey leads northward in a straight direction to Lom Palankah, on the Danube, thirty-five miles below Widdin; but from this point it has to be made on a road which is twice as long as it need be. I believe that *viâ* Pirot is shorter; but this route was not taken, probably because the road leads for nearly twenty miles close to the (then) Servian frontier. At the present day the districts of Pirot and Nish belong to Servia.

We crossed the Balkans by the Ghintzi Pass, at the northern outlet of which lies the town of Berkovitza.

The Balkan scenery is magnificent, sometimes of overwhelming grandeur. The passage was accomplished with only one serious mishap: the loss of a cart with its two oxen and its driver, who tumbled in a ghastly, twirling heap into the awful abyss below and were lost to human aid and human vision. To get the guns over the steep, narrow paths was a difficult and dangerous task. One gun got into such a precarious position that it could be saved only by cutting the traces, detaching the carriage with axe-

blows, and allowing the latter to roll into the precipice, where it broke into splinters with a terrific crash. There were scores of minor accidents: broken limbs and dislocated joints, smashed carts, and so forth. A good many horses and oxen fell, and had to be killed. On the whole our passage showed a favourable result, for a certain percentage of accidents and losses is reckoned upon.

The highest elevation of the Ghintzi Pass is 4800 feet above sea-level; the surrounding summits rise to 6500 feet.

We had as assistants and advisers men who, in private life, followed the vocation of robbers. The Balkan genus of the species robber was scarcer than the Rhodopé genus, and is now extinct. As guides we had a few zaptiés (gendarmes), fine strapping fellows, who seemed to be on excellent terms with the brigands. These gendarmes, 14,000 in all, of which 5000 are mounted men (that is, in 1877; to-day, 52,000 all told), are formed into battalions and brigades when war breaks out, and are looked upon by the Turks with great favour, who consider them the *élite* of the Ottoman Army.

Between Berkovitza and Lom Palankah there is not a single place of importance. West Bulgaria has few towns, but hamlets and villages innumerable. The first half of this stage is through hilly and pretty country, the second is uninteresting, partly in gently undulating, partly in flat territory.

In Lom Palankah, a fortress considered strong by the Turks and crowded with soldiers, we stayed a night in camp, and then continued on the bent road which I have mentioned; but next day, near some villages (Topolovatz and Krivobara), the infantry, cavalry,

and packhorses were taken, by Bulgarian guides, along field-paths, whilst artillery and train proceeded on the high-road. The guides led us, across downs, to the Danube near Artzar or Artchar, where we camped, and whence we continued, next morning, on the bank of this majestic river.

In the evening we came to Vidbol, where we stayed for twelve hours and made ourselves look presentable; on the following afternoon (April 22) we marched into the camp of Widdin.

We had accomplished the distance between Sofia and Widdin in twelve days, an average of ten miles daily. The artillery and train had to tramp the road *viâ* Bielogradchik (Belgradchik), and arrived late in the evening of the following day (April 23). The entire journey from Bellova to Widdin, 165 miles in a straight line, had occupied twenty days, including the day's rest at Sofia and the extra day taken by the artillery.

The weather had been fine throughout, but chilly after dark, with cold blasts from the north. I had in my company two footsore men in the carts; two I had left behind in Berkovitza: one had broken his leg in the passage of the Balkans, the other had swollen glands in the groin. I was slightly sore at the heels.

The two permanent camps of Widdin lay two and a half miles north-west of the town, and held already 10,000 men. They were comfortable and in good sanitary condition; discipline, temper, and *morale* of the Widdin troops were excellent.

In the evening of April 22, hearing that the commander, Mushir Osman Pasha, was in camp—he had his headquarters in town—I presented myself at a tent where I was told he was in consultation. An

aide-de-camp took my message, which was that I had arrived with the detachment entrusted to me, except three men invalided and dropped *en route*, and returned saying that the Mushir wished me to retain my command until after the arrival of the artillery and train, when I should have fresh instructions from Colonel Mahomed Hussein Bey (Pardo Pasha returned to Lom Palankah next day, and I did not see him again). The aide-de-camp added, in a private whisper: "Things look very black; the Czar is expected in Kishineff, where six mobilised corps are concentrated, ostensibly for the manœuvres; we expect the declaration of war at any moment."

Next day (April 23) it was all over the camp that the outbreak of hostilities was near. This prospect wrought the men's enthusiasm up to the highest pitch; with firm step, head high, and bright eyes, even the veriest stripling (myself, *verbi gratia*) strutted about, as if the victor's laurels rested already on his brow.

I took care that my men made themselves look smart; otherwise we had nothing to do but to rest, chat, and smoke. Our guns and carts arrived late in the evening.

We spent an anxious and excited night. Somehow we were all sleepless: for death loomed darkly in the distance.

CHAPTER III

THE DECLARATION OF WAR : TWO AND A HALF MONTHS' INACTIVITY IN WIDDIN

April 24 *to July* 12, 1877

Widdin (Bulgarian, Bodun) counted, in 1877, 13,000 (now 16,000) peaceful inhabitants, of which half were Bulgarians, a fourth Turks, the rest being composed of Roumanians, Greeks, and Jews, with a sprinkling of Servians and Austrians. Gipsies and Circassians were settled in the neighbouring villages.

The town lay for the Turks—and lies at the present day for the Bulgarians—in a peculiarly exposed position. The triangular territory, shaped thus by the course of the Danube, the natural boundary of Bulgaria and Roumania, cuts deep into the country of two possible (in 1877 certain) enemies : Servia on the west, Roumania on the north and east.

The Danube is here 2800 yards wide. Opposite is the Roumanian town Calafat (3000 inhabitants) ; between the two is a flat island, claimed at that time by Turkey, two and a half miles long, uninhabited, with a deserted fortification. The distance between this island and the Roumanian shore is 500 yards. There are also three smaller islands.

The fortifications of Widdin were of modern construction, held 500 pieces of heavy fort artillery, and were well kept and in thorough fighting condition. The terraces and batteries on the water side were of an imposing character. On the land side there were two concentric lines of works, each semicircular in shape. The outer line was an earth wall twenty feet high, with several parallel ditches ten feet deep, broken by eleven redoubts, each holding a battery; the end redoubts rested on the Danube, one on each side of the town. The low-lying meadows in front of the trenches could be (and were later) flooded with river-water. The inner enceinte was of a more formidable character, consisting of seven well-built and heavily armed bastions. Between the two lines were suburbs and encampments. The inner line enclosed the town proper, which contained two barracks, two hospitals, a steam factory for army biscuits, and the picturesque old Bulgarian castle, a heavy, jail-like relic of the Middle Ages, which served as magazine. There were no outworks, save one a mile above the town, on the river, called Yeni Tabiya (New Battery); later, other isolated batteries were constructed.

Widdin's natural protection—besides the Danube—consists of the flat, exposed, marshy approaches which surround the town in a semicircle, these being in their turn bordered by a concentric line of hills. On the slope of one of these, two and a half miles north-west of the town, near the village of Inova, on the Flortin (Florentin) road, was our camp; that of the field artillery lay a mile to the west of us, near Smerdan, on the Bregovo-Negotin-Belgrad high-road. A third, smaller camp, established at a later date, was two miles to the north-east of ours.

The climate of Widdin is unhealthy.

Calafat lies on a higher level than Widdin, which latter is therefore more exposed to Calafat's guns than Calafat is to Widdin's artillery. On April 24 Calafat was almost denuded of troops and barely armed. Why Osman did not occupy it I do not know.

Under favourable conditions the Danube is navigable for small seagoing vessels up to Calafat.

From the hills surrounding the town, Widdin, with the minarets of its thirty-two mosques, and commanded by the towering Bulgarian castle, looked gay, picturesque, and Oriental; to it Calafat presented a striking contrast, being sober, plain, and European.

Early on April 24 I reported myself to Colonel Mahomed Hussein Bey, and asked for instructions. He had none to give me, save to retain my command until further orders. He added that there was much running to and fro between the Mushir's headquarters in town and the tent of the camp-commander—I think it was then Adil Pasha, who will appear frequently in these pages; that the wire between Widdin and Constantinople had been at work all night; that Osman had not been to bed, and had repeatedly been called to the telegraph-office to hold telegraphic conversations with the Padishah.

During our discussions a comical incident occurred. Suddenly Miralaï Mahomed Hussein Bey exclaimed, in good vulgar German: "Au, du verdammter Schweinehund!" referring, poetically and appropriately, to an early and precocious bee, which had climbed up his arm beneath the sleeve on a private journey of discovery. I replied, demurely: "Ich danke für das hübsche Compliment, Herr Oberst"; whereupon we both burst out into a hearty laugh. The colonel took

me into his tent, where we squashed the invader and applied ointment from a travelling-box of medicine, spirits, and cosmetics. He gave me a glass of capital Cognac and a fine cigar (I remember it was a Villar Regalia Reina fina), and told me that he hailed from Hamburg; that he had run away from home as a youngster; that in Constantinople he had made himself agreeable to a pasha, and *voilà* the result. His features proved to me his Semitic origin. He had turned Mahomedan (in everything save abstinence), passed for a Turk, and had seven wives and concubines and twenty children in Constantinople. He advised me to look after my promotion by making myself a toady to my superiors and sinking every consideration of honour, manliness, pride, and dignity, and to look after the main chance whenever I had money to handle. I need hardly say that I acted in every respect in direct opposition to his advice. The Old Sinner gave me his benediction and fifty cigars, and told me to hold my tongue—which I have done up to this day. His redeeming features, as I learnt, were splendid behaviour under fire, coolness, determination, and readiness of resource. He was sent, a few days afterwards, to Biélogradchik, and was wounded when the Servians took Pirot (December 28, 1877), as I heard during my incarceration in Kharkoff.

In camp there was everywhere the subdued excitement which precedes an important event. The men held *sotto voce* discussions, officers talked in whispers, in knots of two or three, or in circular groups, with parliamentary procedure. Messengers ran to and fro, aides-de-camp galloped between camp and town, and every officer coming from the fort was waylaid and interrogated.

Late in the afternoon I was in my tent with Jack and Sergeant Sefi, engaged in making out a clean copy of my roll. Outside, Ibrahim was superintending the company washing their socks, in borrowed tubs. My tent I shared with Seymour, Tereb, and five lieutenants from our old march battalion.

Suddenly there was a commotion, rushing to and fro, exclamations, a roar which swelled into a tremendous shout. Jack, who had gone out, came back immediately with a grave face, and uttered the momentous Arabic word "harb," *i.e.* "War." We three Franks shook hands in silence. Just then Ibrahim rushed in, terribly excited. After having told us that the report had originated nobody knew where, and had spread nobody knew how, he added that the men were so wildly enthusiastic that the harmless, necessary washing-tub drill was out of the question. I stepped out, and soon put this right with a few mild reproaches; I quoted Napoleon's maxim, "Wars are won with the legs," and added one of my own: "A leg is nothing without a stocking."

Late in the evening we officers were bidden to Colonel Mahomed Hussein's presence, and the latter formally told us, in the name of the Mushir, that the Czar had declared war upon the Sultan. Parade was to be held early next morning. The Old Sinner, having too freely consulted his medicine-chest on the strength of the bee's and the Czar's declarations of hostilities, was wise enough not to make the speech which the occasion called for.

During the night sentries were set around the camp; but my company was exempt from this duty. From this moment no civilians were allowed to enter without permits.

Next morning (April 25) we turned out *en masse* to an open space outside, and there a general—I think it was Adil Pasha—made a speech. I was too far off to catch its purport; but I joined lustily in the shouts of "Allah Akbar," *i.e.* God is great, which in Turkish do duty for the British "three cheers." I saw and heard enough to feel convinced that the Widdin army was animated by enthusiasm and patriotism in their highest and best form.

There was much speechifying during the next weeks. The Padishah had proclaimed the holy war (Tchihad or Ghaza) against the Ghiaurs; the commanding generals and the priests took care to feed the fire of religious zeal. But the fanaticism of the Turkish soldier is a good deal less rampant, whilst his patriotism is greater, than is popularly believed. Many officers considered the "holy war" game played out, and even illiterate men used to smile at the spouters, who, by the way, were in the habit of displaying a *black* banner.

Later in the day I was asked by Colonel Mahomed Hussein for my roll, and an hour afterwards I received orders to send the fifty Redifmen to another part of the camp. I bade them good-bye in suitable words, and their spokesman expressed gratitude for my kindness. I instructed Lieutenant Tereb to deliver them to their respective majors. A little later Sergeant Sefi and the two corporals who had come with us from Constantinople were summoned to join a detachment which was being formed to proceed to Rahova. Jack and I took Sefi into our tent, which happened to be deserted. The poor old chap pressed our hands hard, and said, "God bless you, gentlemen," in a trembling voice. That was the last I saw of him.

By Colonel Mahomed Hussein's orders I retained command of my 150 recruits, with Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb, until next morning (April 26). Then I received instructions to place my detachment and myself at the disposal of Major Taki, commanding a Nizamié battalion quartered in another part of the camp; this done, my command would terminate. I took care that my men looked their best, and that my own humble person appeared to advantage. Carrying all our belongings with us, we marched to our destination. I drew the men up in double line, Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb in front with drawn swords, and reported myself to the Major, who inspected us and expressed satisfaction. An hour later the 150 men had been incorporated, in nearly equal parts, into the four companies of which this battalion was composed. To my intense joy, Jack and Ibrahim remained with me in the same company, which had lost its lieutenants, save one, in the Servian campaign. Thus ended my first company command, after having lasted thirty-one days.

My company consisted of 160 privates, including the recruits, divided into three squads, the first under Lieutenant Hardar, the second under Lieutenant Herbert, the third under Lieutenant Seymour. Each squad had a sergeant and a corporal. The company carried the battalion's colours, which were entrusted to Lieutenant Tereb, who had under him a corporal and twelve privates; I shall call this fourth squad the colour squad. The standard was of red cloth, with white half-moon and star. Our venerable rag had seen service since 1828. Each battalion had also a green flag, consecrated to the Prophet, which did not take the field, but was kept at home, and brought out

on religious festivals. I never saw ours. In many battalions each company had a small flag for rallying purposes; but my battalion did not possess these company-colours.

My company counted 5 officers (captain and 4 lieutenants), 7 N.C.O.'s, about 160 men, and 6 non-combatants (bugler, 2 drummers, captain's orderly, who acted as company clerk, and 2 train soldiers in charge of four packhorses); total about 180. At this strength the company remained until the first battle (July 20).

To the best of my recollections the "takim," *i.e.* half or third or fourth, sometimes fifth, part of a company, here called squad, had never more than two non-commissioned officers, though I cannot say whether this was a regulation, or the result of a dearth. In 1885 the uniform subdivision of the company into four sections (called sinf), was introduced, with a sufficiency of N.C.O.'s for each sinf.

The other three companies of my battalion had approximately an average strength of 160 each, all told.

The battalion counted 19 officers (major, adjutant, four captains, 13 lieutenants), 26 N.C.O.'s, nearly 600 men, and 30 non-combatants (clerk, surgeon, 4 buglers, 8 drummers, 4 captain's clerks or orderlies, 12 train soldiers in charge of two oxcarts and 18 packhorses); total 670.

Of the five officers of my company, four were mekteblis—a unique proportion. The three captains and the nine lieutenants of the other three companies of my battalion were alaïlis. Of the nineteen officers of my battalion, five were mekteblis and fourteen alaïlis.

I must here introduce my brethren-in-arms.

Major Yussuf (Joseph) Taki was of Persian descent and of Stamboul birth. He was the best-educated Turkish officer I have met, having been to school in Germany, and a year each in London and Paris. He spoke the three languages fluently, likewise Arabic and Persian. As an officer, he was excellent so far as administration and organisation were concerned, for which reason our battalion generally fared better than other troops; but under fire he had the propensity of becoming excited and losing his head, although his courage cannot be doubted. He was a strict disciplinarian, and very particular as regards the men's personal appearance—a sore point with the Osmanli soldier. He had ample means, was fond of good cheer, and drank a little in secret, a habit learnt in England; he was forty-five years old, passably good-looking, and inclined to be stout. He had one wife, in Constantinople, an Armenian Christian from Ispahan, who had born him several children. Throughout the campaign he behaved well to us.

The kol aghassi or Major's adjutant was a Constantinople man by descent and birth. He was an alaïli, and owed his promotion to the patronage of some pasha. He acted as a counterfoil to the major, being cool and determined in action, but bad as regards administration, because ignorant. To us officers he was all smiles; to the men he behaved brutally, and was loathed accordingly. I did not like him, and had, happily, little or nothing to do with him.

The kiatib (clerk) was a painstaking and capable official and a gentlemanly young fellow. He had been in Vienna, spoke German, played a shrill tin whistle with dexterity and murderous effect, and won my money at domino.

The surgeon was gruff, uncouth, and unpopular. His skill was mediocre; his energy and activity left nothing to be desired.

The battalion's aged sergeant-major deserves mention only because he was the worst specimen of the few bad members of the Turkish Army I have met, being lazy, voracious, selfish, dishonest, and a coward.

Our captain was called Ahmed Mustafa Derbendi, and was born and bred in Constantinople. He was little and ugly, but strong and wiry, and as agile as a kid, having in his appearance and movements some resemblance to a vicious goat. He was fairly educated. Under fire he was brave and dashing, but in the administration of the company he had the fault of leaving too much to the first-lieutenant to do; the latter, being overburdened with work, was not always able to make good the captain's dilatoriness, in spite of his zeal and activity. The captain had a peculiar habit of falling asleep without a second's warning and at the most unlikely moments; but occasionally he would feign sleep, and watch the men from under his half-closed eyelids. He was good-natured, and in many respects remarkably childish; for instance, he loved gambling for a few piastres, or for cigarettes, and even biscuits, by means of dice improvised out of pebbles and thrown at a mark—a game of his own invention. He treated me very well, always *en camarade;* frequently he would consult me.

The first-lieutenant, Mehemed Hardar by name, came from a Mesopotamian family settled in Constantinople. He was twenty-eight years old, over six feet high and broad to correspond, and of enormous physical and constitutional strength. He had gained his promotion to the rank of mulazim evvel during the

Servian campaign. He was an alaïli, and owed his progress entirely to his usefulness. To the captain he was indispensable; even the major treated him with marked respect. I have already mentioned his zeal and diligence. He was a little slow of comprehension: he did not easily grasp the meaning of an order, of a remark, and was unwieldy also in his movements; with this reservation he was a good and reliable officer. Personally, I was much attached to him; I always found him a loyal friend. His education was primitive—he could read and write, that was all. He was a lover of chess, and a fine player; later, in Plevna, where we had board and men, he would bring these out at the most inopportune moments, with the request to me for just one game. In Widdin camp we had primitive wooden chessmen, made by the soldiers, from Hardar's designs, of the most ridiculous pattern. We drew a board on the back of my map of Bulgaria. A touching feature in Hardar's character was his great love for his mother; but this is no more than a characteristic trait of all Turks. Mehemed's death in the battle of July 30 must have been a catastrophe to the family.

With the lieutenant of the second squad (whose name was both pronounced and spelt by the Turks Vilyam Herbet, without the second r in the surname, and with the accent on the last syllable in both names) you are (or fancy that you are) on terms of considerable intimacy; also him of the third, John Seymour, and the fourth, Ibrahim Tereb, you know well. There remains but to mention the greatest original, and in many respects the most admirable among the hundreds of Turks whom I have personally known—I refer to the sergeant of my squad. This man, Mustafa el

Bakal by name (called Mustafa by his comrades, Bakal—a nickname, meaning grocer—by the officers, to distinguish him from scores of other Mustafas), came from Silivri, on the Sea of Marmora ; he was fifty years old, short, thin, grizzly, withered ; his face was disfigured by small-pox, a dozen scars, and two or three so-called " date marks." He had joined the army as a lad, and had fought in and near Silistria in 1853 and 1854, before Sebastopol 1855, in Montenegro 1862, in Crete 1866 to 1868, in Bosnia and Servia 1876 ; peace service he had seen in the Caucasus, in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Arabia. He could read and write Turkish and Arabic, and speak Bulgarian and half a dozen of the Caucasus dialects. All that he knew—and he was a well-informed man—he had taught himself, for as a child he had learnt nothing. The range of his accomplishments was astounding. He could cook like a French chef, make clothes like a tailor, mend boots like an accomplished cobbler, bind up a wound and set a broken limb better than the average Turkish army surgeon, prescribe effectually for every known disorder, beat the drum and blow the bugle in a manner to shame professional performers ; he was the best shot of the battalion, and in the erection of earthworks trained engineers appeared contemptible beside him. He could lead a squad, a company, a battalion as well as, or better than, any lieutenant, captain, or major could, and had done so in emergencies. He had been everywhere, had seen everything, knew every road, path, hill, village, farm and khan throughout his sovereign's dominions. He could set sentries, pitch camp, throw out skirmishers, effect a retreat, form a square, like a Prussian company leader. With this he was respectful, polite, and grave. He never laughed, on principle ; he

used to say: "a *man* never laughs." He was cool and brave in action, never lost his head, never lost his temper. His readiness of resource was wonderful. He had a way out of every difficulty, a remedy for every evil, an antidote for every scrape or obstacle, an item of personal experience to draw upon in every unforeseen circumstance; in the latter particular his splendid memory was of never-failing aid. The manner in which he managed the sometimes terribly difficult question of supplies was admirable; often my squad had a good meal when others were starving. To the men he was considerate, but would not overlook an offence or relax discipline. They had the good sense to see of what immense value he was to the squad, and liked him, not only for that, but also for his integrity and sense of justice. With invalids he was as gentle as a woman, in worldly matters outside his vocation as simple as a child. From first to last he was my guide, philosopher, and friend. What I should have done without him I know not. Never once did he fail me when I appealed to him for advice or assistance, or for an act of friendship. I have not seen him or heard from him since we parted in Bukarest.

The corporal of my squad can claim attention only in so far as he was a good average specimen of the Turkish non-commissioned officer: ignorant, apathetic unless roused, but reliable, obedient, and willing; never acting on his own initiative, but always executing orders with the utmost scrupulousness; doing his duty well, but no more than his duty; stubborn rather than brave, with a fine contempt of death and a supreme hatred of Ghiaurs in general and Russians, Servians and Bulgarians in particular; contented, patient, with splendid powers of endurance; coarse, uncouth,

occasionally brutal, but moral, sober, and kind to co-religionists.

The following summary judgment, which I am qualified to pass, on the men of my company can be applied to the Turkish foot-soldiers in general, of whom those under and near me were fair average specimens: In attack they lacked the dash of the Roumanian infantry (which was even better than the Russian); on the defensive they were so stubborn, undaunted, and obstinate as to justify Moltke's observation, "The Turks only commence to defend where others leave off." They were cheerful and obedient under circumstances which would have demoralised others, and not only existed, but retained strength and faculties, where others would have succumbed to privations.

As regards the superior officers directly above me, I must pass over the grades of kaim-makam and miralaï, as I had half a dozen colonels during the war. My mirliva changed thrice.

My ferik was Adil Pasha, one of the most trusted officers of the Ottoman Army, brave, painstaking, and unselfish. The Mushir placed much reliance on him; he acted throughout the campaign as second-in-command and as Osman's deputy, and was looked upon in camp as a thoroughly efficient leader. He was not brilliant, but absolutely reliable. "As trustworthy as the Almighty himself," the soldiers used to say of him, in a phrase which was a kind of *jeu d'esprit:* "Allah Ghibi Sadik Adil." As "Adil" is also an adjective, meaning "just," the phrase bears this second interpretation: "Faithful and just as God." Surely, greater thing cannot be said of any man?

When, years later, I heard of Adil's death, I sent a card, inscribed with my name and those words, to one

in authority, known to me, with the request that the card be laid on or in Adil's grave. This, I believe, was done. Adil was my Divisional General, from the day of my arrival in Widdin to the bloody end on the Vidplain. "Aleihi-s-selam," "On him be peace," as the Moslems say.

At this juncture I crave permission to introduce the man who will be known to the remotest posterity as the Defender of Plevna, to the Turks as Ghazi (*i.e.* the Victorious) Osman.

Mushir Ghazi Osman Nuri Pasha was born in Tokat, Asia Minor, in 1837. He passed the War School, entered the cavalry, fought as second lieutenant in the Crimean War 1854 to 1856, distinguished himself at Eupatoria, March 21, 1855, became first lieutenant 1856, served during the Syrian rebellion, and became captain 1860; fought in Crete, and became major 1866, lieutenant-colonel 1867, colonel 1871; took part in the Yemen campaign, 1871 and 1872; became general of brigade 1874, general of division 1875. In the Servian War he beat the enemy in the decisive battles of Isvor (July 18, 1876) and Saitchar (August 7, 1876), and was made Mushir (marshal).

If honours and distinctions, fame and wealth, can make a man happy, Osman ought to have considered himself the luckiest man alive. At home and abroad he has been celebrated, and deservedly so, as one of the heroes of modern history; he has made the world ring with the record of his deeds. Far better had the fair and spotless fame of a soldier sufficed him, and had he not wallowed in the polluted pool of politics. He should have borne in mind that no one, not a god, can touch filth without soiling his fingers. But let us conveniently forget what has happened since 1878

for the sake of the glorious past, and let the reader's memory recall lovingly the thrill that went through the astounded world when from the green hills of an obscure Bulgarian town Osman thundered his imperative, "thus far, and no farther," into the ears of Russia's hosts, when the skies were rent with the fame of the Defence of Plevna.

Osman, though not tall, was of dignified presence. He was taciturn and grave, abrupt of speech and manner, rather disdainful in looks and words, and had naught about him of the petty forms of politeness. A peculiarity of his was a violent dislike of foreigners—English, French, Germans, Russians, all alike. In 1877 he had never left his own country (except when campaigning), and spoke, besides Turkish and Arabic, only a little French, and that little badly.

In later years, when he had passed his fiftieth birthday, his physical inertness, favoured by the shattered leg which was the consequence of the last sortie, became even more pronounced; he grew stout, and his character changed: he became less intolerant, less gruff, less grave, more social and talkative, displaying wit, humour, *bonhomie*.

After the war I met Osman once, in Constantinople, in 1898. Present were also two other Turkish officers of high rank, a German in the Ottoman Service, and one of Osman's sons (or nephews), who lives in my memory as a scented, effeminate dandy. Though this was a ceremonial visit Osman wore of his many decorations none but the Plevna Order. All other distinctions were, then and always, non-existing for him, and no Army Orders, not even his own, at the time when he was Serasker, could induce him to exhibit them. The interview lasted two hours, but Plevna

and the war were mentioned but once. I attributed this to Osman's notorious modesty; but I heard later that there was a contributory cause. The Sultan was madly jealous of Osman's popularity, though he was cunning enough never to miss an opportunity for embracing him in public; to avoid friction, Osman never discussed the events of 1877 before his compatriots. The one mention of the name Plevna came from Osman's lips. The German, accustomed to Teutonic official honesty, complained bitterly of the non-payment of salaries, stating that he had to accept bribes and embezzle public money, in order to live. Osman said: "I do it. I openly confess it. I publish it broadcast. I want all the world to know it. Perhaps, when it becomes notorious that the Defender of Plevna must cheat and steal in order to exist, that iniquitous system will cease."

He did not live to see an improvement. He died in 1901, at the age of sixty-four, mourned by an empire, admired by the civilised world, furiously and vindictively, though secretly, hated by his sovereign whom he had served so well.

Osman was a good husband, an exemplary father, fond of his home, free from vice, modest in his wants.

For thirty-four years I have asked myself a question. During the war Osman submitted to the Sultan on nine occasions known to me, and on more occasions, probably, not known to me, elaborate and feasible strategical plans. These were either vetoed (twice to my knowledge) or ignored (four times to my knowledge), or accepted *exactly one day too late* (thrice to my knowledge). Is this a coincidence, or was it a mad design, dictated by insane jealousy and envy? On the two occasions on which I could have asked the point-blank

question of those immediately concerned the presence of watchful witnesses restrained me. Now I shall not know until I know all.

A feverish activity commenced with the day of the declaration of hostilities: real, hard, solid, practical warlike exercises several hours each day on the hills, which provided excellent manœuvring ground; target-practice, with a supreme disregard for consumption of cartridges astounding in impecunious Turkey; parades and inspections by mirlivas and feriks almost daily; examinations of foot-gear, underclothing, uniforms, outfit; sharpening of swords and bayonets; rifles taken to pieces, cleaned, inspected, tested. Supplies came hourly from the surrounding towns and villages—forage, grain, cattle. Ammunition was dealt out. We had sentries round the camp, strengthened at night, outposts on every prominent point of the hills, detachments in the towns and villages on the Servian frontier, and in those on the Danube.

The nearest point of the Servian frontier is thirteen miles to the north-west of Inova, but an eminence interrupts the view.

Roumania was looked upon as a certain enemy, although up to May 8 no shot was fired. Servia was known to be too exhausted to take the field; but everybody knew that Prince Milan was only waiting for Turkey to stumble, when he would appear on the scene to share in the spoil.

Calafat was eagerly scanned through the telescopes. Towards the end of April there were movements of troops visible, and guns came in. The rage in camp was great against the wirepullers at home, the Imperial favourites and parasites who constituted the Council of War, and had prevented the Mushir from occupying

Calafat and the islands of the Danube; for it became known that Osman had submitted elaborate plans for an invasion of Roumania, which had been vetoed. The soldiers' confidence in the Victor of Saitchar was unbounded; the Government at home and the supreme command were held in open contempt.

It did not take me many days to become thoroughly conversant with the routine of a leader of a squad of fifty men: I had Sergeant Bakal as competent and never-failing adviser. To call over the names twice a day; to send a detachment every morning for water to a stream; to see that the men kept themselves, their clothing and their tents, clean, garments, footgear, and arms in good condition; that they behaved with decency and order; to arrange the days and hours for bathing and washing, and supervise these; to watch over the distribution of the rations and the cooking of dinner—these and other domestic matters constituted the prosaic but necessary and useful part of my duties. I found out the good points of every man, and distributed the various offices accordingly: A is a good cook, B is a professional cobbler, C can mend clothes, D is a barber and haircutter, E is a skilful mechanic, and can repair rifles; and so forth. Likewise I ascertained their weak points: F is dirty, and wants special supervision on washing days; G is greedy, and requires watching at meal-times; H is footsore; and so forth. Sergeant Bakal, having had charge of the squad from the battle of Alexinatz (October 28, 1876) until my arrival, knew the men thoroughly, and I had but to follow his advice.

During leisure hours we officers fenced and practised revolver-shooting; occasionally we borrowed horses and had a ride across the hills. We played chess, draughts,

domino; the Turks had various other games, among them a species of backgammon. I started a diary, and wrote home, receiving several letters in reply whilst I was in Widdin camp. The advent of the mails was as erratic as that of comets; on an average we received letters once a week; the postal arrangements were bad, and grew worse as time went on. Some of us sent regularly to a Greek grain-merchant in Widdin for European newspapers, which were generally three weeks old. Turkish papers were occasionally distributed. French novels, Austrian journals, as well as fruit, cakes, sweets, and small articles of every description, could be purchased of the pedlars, mostly Jews and gipsies, who besieged the camp, but were not allowed inside, except with permits.

The men amused themselves with wrestling, running matches, and highly diverting donkey-races, often for prizes (tobacco and coffee) given by the officers. After dusk, recitations by the camp-fires were a favourite recreation, at which also officers attended; for some of the men had remarkable histrionic talent, and the euphonious Turkish language is music in itself without the aid of flats, flutes, and semi-quavers. Such a group presented a striking and romantic picture.

Turkish soldiers have not the boisterous merriment of the German and French; they are sedate and contented, and know how to draw enjoyment out of little material.

The weather was fine. In May we were in the midst of summer. Rare and brief showers did no damage and caused no discomfort. June brought heat, broken by north winds and cool, dewy nights; in July the heat was intense and continuous.

Bands we had none; but scratch orchestras were formed by the buglers and drummers, and by amateurs with tin whistles, fifes, cornets, and triangles. There were several big drums, kettledrums, and cymbals in camp; these were brought out occasionally. The result was terrifying. The most formidable and unnerving of our musical instruments was a species of bagpipes with an unearthly sound. The concertina, the cad's delight in all countries, terrorised also the Sultan's army; the specimen in question had been bought of one of the Jews who prowled around the camp. Sometimes the gipsies would give us a concert, with violins, tambourines, and guitars; and dark-skinned, lustrous-eyed maidens in picturesque tatters would swing their shapely limbs in voluptuous rhythm. These "girls," however, were rarely what they pretended to be: most of them were boys dressed in fantastic female costumes. To wind up this asthmatic dissertation on music I have to express heartfelt gratitude for one providential circumstance: in 1877 the banjo had not yet been introduced in the East. It only wanted the banjo to make our musical misery complete!

Each tent held ten men. We five officers of the company had one between us. The tents were good, strong, and comfortable; we made ours cosy and homelike. We had a table fitting round the centre-pole, several camp-stools, a cupboard and a chest of drawers manufactured by the company's joiner out of empty cases, and painted gaily in green and red, and a washing-stand improvised out of superannuated cooking-utensils. The ground was covered with matting and sheepskins; our beds (a mattress, a bolster, and two blankets each) were on the floor. We bought many

little articles for use, comfort, and ornament in Widdin and the villages, and of the pedlars.

I wish I had the time to stroll with you through this town of canvas, and show you the ferik's luxurious quarters, a tent of green material embroidered with red, the post-office, the telegraph office, the Staff's office, the kitchens, the workshops, the stables, the thousand-and-one curiosities which merely to enumerate would encroach unpardonably upon my space and your leisure.

The administration of the Widdin army was better than that of the other Turkish forces, thanks to its capable and energetic commander; but I have heard it said, by prisoners in Russia, that affairs in the East Bulgarian corps were simply disgraceful, even before the war, until later Mehemed Ali Pasha brought German discipline and honesty to bear upon corrupt Turkish officialdom. How we should have fared without Osman and his able chief of staff, Tahir Pasha, I cannot venture to say. As it was, the supply of no article of food could be depended upon, save the biscuits, which were made in Widdin, and were of good quality. Pillage, though strictly forbidden, could not always be avoided, for men must eat. But such occurrences were rare, and it speaks well for the *morale* of the Widdin army that they did not affect discipline.

The out-of-door existence suited Jack and me capitally; we were in splendid health and exuberant spirits. The romance of camp-life never wore off; the salutary influences of God's fresh air and glorious sky, of discipline and physical exercise, have lasted me through all these years.

Now for the seamy side. Punishments for small offences were: Partial withdrawal of rations; arrest

in sheds erected for the purpose; extra labour of a menial kind; for more serious crimes, flogging. The bastinado had been in practice abolished the year before, and was legally abolished a year or two later. The flogging was administered in this wise: the delinquent's arms were bound behind, and his head was held "in chancery," so that legs and back formed an acute angle; the apex of the later was denuded of its clothing, and presently also of its natural covering by a strong dose of cold bamboo-cane. I had occasion to complain of a man's dirtiness and indecency; the captain spoke to the major, who prescribed fifty grains or units of the medicine aforesaid, which were administered under my supervision. I did not like this turn of affairs, but was not allowed to back out of it. Later I was glad: the man improved greatly. For a day or two his antics when attempting to sit down were both instructive and exhilarating.

Officers were punished for slight offences (such as exceeding leave of absence or being late for drill) with arrest, for repetitions or less trifling misdemeanours with incarceration in Widdin, or degradation. The Mushir had the power of promotion to the rank of miralaï, later extended to that of ferik; he had also the power of degradation, and exercised it, though not within my circle of acquaintances.

For grave offences — desertion, disobedience, treachery, neglect of sentry duty, and, later, cowardice —the punishment was death. One deserter from Widdin was caught as he was crossing the Servian frontier near Bregovo. He was shot next morning. I was present, and was struck by the calm and serene expression on his countenance: evidently he had made his peace with God. His was the first dead body I

had beheld in my life: a few months later I had seen thousands.

There were not many deserters from Widdin; and later, in Plevna, until November, deserters were few and far between. Not so with the other Turkish armies, Suleiman's excepted. Not the fear of the enemy, but the bad food-supply, caused entire companies to disappear, so that sometimes one battalion had to be made out of the remnants of two or three.

Spies were tried by court-martial, and, if found guilty, were sometimes shot, sometimes hung. Five or six, all Bulgarians, were executed whilst I was in Widdin camp. Many were allowed to escape for want of proof.

Pillage, marauding, and outrages upon Christians were looked upon as serious crimes, and punished generally with a severe flogging; murder, with death.

A number of marauding loafers hung around camp and followed us afterwards to Plevna. When caught in the act small mercy was shown to them. In May six were surprised sacking a Bulgarian house, and were strung up there and then. Later, battle-field hyænas were dealt with in a like manner. I myself have cheerfully assisted when a dozen of these were hoisted in a row.

I never incurred a punishment, but was once in disgrace, through no fault of mine, of which more in its proper place. Jack's and Ibrahim's records were stainless.

Lastly, the religious side of camp-life. Our devotions were practised in this wise: For want of a steeple or minaret two long poles had been erected, between which was fastened a ladder. This a fellow in picturesque garments climbed morning and evening, with as

much grace and agility as his burly figure would allow. A sentence from the Koran was sung out from the lofty position on the top step, and almost everybody flopped down ; a few used to stand with folded arms or hands ; some knelt ; most men touched the earth with their chins, whilst their posteriors pointed heavenward in a dignified, artistic, and religious manner. A few verses were recited, and the ceremony was over. On Fridays there was grand parade ; during the day men were sent in relays to the Widdin mosques ; but in May the latter practice ceased.

Early on May 8 I obtained leave of absence for the day : I brushed my clothes, polished my boots with grease, made the steel of my sword sparkle, curled an imaginary moustache, and walked to town to astonish the natives.

Widdin, like all Turkish towns, was disappointing. The exterior was charming, the interior stank.

As I was looking about for a likely place to buy cigarettes, a group of officers came round the corner, with measured steps and in grave consultation. In front was a man with a handsome bearded face and keen eyes—a man born to command, whom the Turkish and Jewish civilians saluted with Oriental stateliness and reverence ; he wore a severely plain uniform, devoid of trappings and decorations. It struck me that this must be the Mushir, whom I had not yet seen. Beside him walked my ferik, Adil Pasha, and two officers whom I did not know at the time : one I ascertained later to be Talahat Bey, one of the Mushir's aides-de-camp, the other an officer of engineers, whose name I have forgotten, and have not found mentioned in the works I have consulted ; when he appears again I shall call him by the fictitious appellation Ali

Bey. The four officers walked with their eyes on the ground, and the Mushir's features bore an expression of annoyance. Behind them were seven or eight others ; among them my major, Tahir Pasha (the Chief of Staff), and Hassib Bey (principal surgeon to the Widdin army), who later, in Plevna, proved himself to be an efficient and capable man.

I threw the Old Sinner's lovely Villar away (it was picked up by the most picturesque and high-flavoured beggar whom it has ever been my lot to see or smell in or out of mendicant-infested Turkey), gave my fez a jaunty twist, and placed myself in military posture. As they passed me, Adil Pasha, who knew me, happened to glance up, and perceiving me, said something to the Mushir. The latter beckoned to Major Taki. The group came to a standstill in front of me. The Mushir said to Adil : "Ask him if he speaks French fluently." I presume this talking to me by proxy was Osman's way of expressing superiority. Adil put the question in Turkish ; I replied in the affirmative. Then the Mushir addressed a colonel of the second group : "Ask him in French what he is doing here." The colonel cleared his throat, and said, with an atrocious accent : "Que faites-vous ici et où allez-vous ?" I made answer : "Je ne fais rien, mon Colonel, je me promène ; j'ai obtenu permission jusqu'au soir." The Mushir thought for a moment, nodded his head negligently, and walked on. Adil Pasha and Major Taki, knowing me personally, returned my salute ; the rest did not. Thus ended my first encounter with the man who has made history.

Seeing a lieutenant of artillery pass by, I asked him : "Can you tell me where I can buy good cigarettes ?"

He replied : " Round the corner ; the little house to the right, with the green door ; Schmaichel, the Austrian Jew. Offer him half of what he demands, and then he will cheat you."

On this excellent recommendation I knocked with my fist at the green door, which was opened by a lovely Jewish girl of barely nineteen, in a pretty costume of European cut, but Oriental in the splendour of its tints. I stated my business in Turkish ; she looked at me hard with her glorious eyes, and said, with a demure, roguish smile on her full, red lips :

" Der Herr Officier sind wol ein Deutscher ? "

Of course I knew I was coming to the house of a German-speaking Jew ; all the same I was taken by surprise. She had an absolutely pure accent, and it sounded so prettily.

By way of reply I took her into my arms, without encountering any difficulty save a mild and formal protest.

This ceremony over, I stated my desire ; whereupon she whispered : " Don't tell grandfather that you have kissed me—he would charge you, oh, such a lot ! "

Then she called out : " Grosspapa ! "

Schmaichel, a venerable Shylock, took me into a little back room like the space behind a small pawnbroker's counter.

I bought 2000 good cigarettes and a pound of smuggled Servian tobacco, the best tobacco I have ever smoked. I gave instructions for sending the packet to camp. Shylock called " Doris ! " the girl took down my directions.

Business over, the old Jew insisted on my drinking a glass of tokay with him to the success of the Ottoman arms.

Doris attended me to the street-door, and watched me from the steps, and when I turned the corner she waved her hand and her eyes sparkled. I felt sad and preoccupied.

Presently, as I was walking aimlessly about, the idea struck me to get a demand draft on my banker in Constantinople cashed. I addressed a passing Lieutenant of the fort engineers, who said—

"At the Jew Schmaichel's, near the clock-tower; the alley with the mosque at the bottom, the house with the green door."

I thought it wiser to wait till another day, when I should have a capital pretext for repeating my visit.

My watch had lately betrayed irregularities of conduct. I saluted a naval officer—I presume he belonged to one of the Danube monitors, two of which were stationed off Widdin—and begged him to advise me.

He said: "Direct your steps to the clock-tower, and ask for Schmaichel the Jew—a little house with a green door."

I was still wondering at Shylock's many-sidedness when a horrible noise shook me out of my reverie. There came round the corner one of those grotesque but highly effective recruiting processions which were at the time a feature of Turkey. Space considerations render a description impossible; suffice it to say that the *mise-en-scène* would have done credit to an accomplished stage-manager.

I got into conversation with some fort officers, who expressed contempt and mistrust of all irregulars, Circassians, volunteers, and such-like ragamuffins. We followed the procession, and watched one of the recruiting sergeants enticing two abject beggars and one decent young fellow; which latter was imme-

diately captured by my companions, who took him into their midst, inviting me to accompany them to the fort.

We passed a green tent, outside of which dirty gipsies were performing a café-chantant tune on guitars, mandolines, Pan's pipes, a scrapy fiddle, and the inevitable big drum with cymbals. This was a place where they enrolled volunteers.

We entered the fortifications by the water side. The captive was handed over to the guard. I accompanied the officers to the terrace, which was in battle array, and looked imposing with its long line of guns in fighting trim: the artillerymen at their stations, squatting on the ground and whiling away the time by telling stories; numerous sentries; groups of officers scanning Calafat; detachments of infantry lying in the shelter of the parapet, rifles piled. Before us stretched the glorious blue Danube. Our two monitors were moored alongside a quay, steam up. I expressed a desire to see them; one of my companions hailed a naval lieutenant who showed me over his craft.

The vessel was in capital trim; the cleanliness of the decks was so painful that I felt constrained to apologise to the lieutenant for stepping on them. The sailors—of whom I saw a dozen—wore the English Jack-tar costume, the stokers bathing-drawers, the gunners (thirty) the uniform of the fort artillery. A company of Chasseurs came on board, with their two light Whitworth guns; they looked smart in their becoming blue-and-green dress. A Scotch engineer's workman, with red hair, whisky aroma, and dirty white-and-yellow blazer, gave me, in return for a quid of tobacco, this tip: "Something is up to-day, sir; have a look-out for squalls."

When I had stepped ashore the two monitors cast off and steamed up the river, like venomous giant beetles in search of prey.

By means of a telescope I scanned the opposite bank. There was not much to be seen. Mid-stream the low, green, deserted islands, where grass, wild flowers, reeds, and shrubs throve in a profusion worthy of a virgin forest's entangled growth; beyond, a long stretch of flat, marshy shore, on the left three miles broad, and bordered by bare green hills of picturesque outline, on the right extending to the confines of the horizon, with a thin column of smoke, lazily curling upwards, denoting a farm or village, and with two ponds like dreamy blue eyes in a placid face. Of human life and activity I perceived little, of war less. Slightly to the right were some huts, and boats drawn up on the mudbank; to the left lay Calafat, on the slope and summit of a hill 100 feet high, whence came the peaceful sound of a lazy, high-toned chapel-bell. The position of the town prevented my seeing the streets, but I detected some masked batteries. On our shore I saw to the left the end redoubt of the outer enceinte (called Ghazi Bair Tabiya, *i.e.* Victorious Hill Battery) and our one outlying work, Yeni Tabiya, the latter nearly opposite Calafat; both looked like molehills. Between them was a waste space, beyond, the flat, green, deserted, tortuous river-bank. Of the rebellious vassal State's armed sons I saw but one specimen—a black speck on the shore exactly opposite, looking much like a flea on green paper; I took him for a scarecrow, until a shifting of position proved him to be a sentinel guarding the embryo kingdom in solitary grandeur against the Unspeakable Turk.

Large vessels there were none in Widdin at that

period, all such having either been requisitioned by the Government and utilised on the Lower Danube, or quitted the probable scene of conflict for peaceful and remunerative climes. Just before the declaration of war several seagoing steamers and a number of karlashes (one-mast sailing-vessels, low in the waist and high in the stern) had arrived with provisions (15,000 tons of flour) and the material for constructing a pontoon bridge to Calafat, which latter was never commenced, thanks to the wirepullers in the Capital. The steamers had gone; the stock of boats and fishermen's craft belonging to the town, the karlashes, and two or three decrepit schooners, were moored in places of safety and guarded by sentries.

A sailing-boat appeared like a white speck in the upper bend of the river, and came floating down towards us in idyllic contempt of the formidable array of guns on either side.

It was 1 p.m., and I felt hungry. My companions intimated that if I happened to be possessed of that useful commodity called para (money), they could undoubtedly get me some dinner from the fort cooks; and as to luxuries, such as coffee, cake, &c., I had but to say the word and hand over the coin, and they would send to town for anything I liked to name. They would be pleased to keep me company, and should they at any time be so lucky as to receive their salaries in good hard liras, they would be charmed to reciprocate; at present I had to take the will for the deed.

I invited all that choose to come, handed over the money, and gave my orders. The report that a British Lord was standing treat all round spread through the fort like wildfire; presently I had twenty guests,

and the soldiers who served us were delighted and zealous.

The table was laid between two projecting corners of a building belonging to the inner enceinte, on a slightly higher level than the terrace, in view of the guns and the river, but concealed from any zealous pasha who might take it into his unreasonable head to step out and have a peep at the rebellious vassals.

I solicited a personal introduction of my guests: one captain, eighteen or twenty lieutenants, all belonging to the infantry stationed in the town, to the fort artillery, or to the engineers.

One said, "If we can get a superior to join us we shall be safe; as it would give an official colouring to the repast."

Some went in search of this useful article, and brought back in triumph a hungry kaim-makam (lieutenant-colonel).

As the first dish (a capital sweet soup, obtained from a Turkish confectioner in the town) was being served out there appeared upon the scene the most incongruous trio I have as yet beheld.

The first, an Englishman, long, lean, and unlovely, was clad in a costume such as only the travelling Briton can invent or wear. It was of thick, shiny, waterproof canvas of an ndescribable hue, a dirty light grey tinged with bilious greenish yellow; it was uniform throughout, even shoes and cap being of this material; and when he wiped his nose, I declare the handkerchief was of the same hue! He carried over his head a parasol of a like colour, and had slung across his shoulders, with straps and cord, a field-glass, a water-bottle, a brandy-flask, a haversack, a leather pouch, and a case containing snuff, tobacco, pipe and cigars.

He was a journalist, and went by the name of Captain Chock, his real name being Mac, but what kind of a Mac I know not.

The second was a small, crooked, shabby, spectacled German surgeon, Doctor Schmidt by name, who looked withered and broken down and somewhat pathetic. He wore as yet his threadbare civilian attire, as they could find no uniform sufficiently small for him.

Captain Chock was 6 ft. 6 in. long, Doctor Schmidt was 4 ft. 6 in. short, and they always walked arm-in-arm through the streets of Widdin. The Turkish word " chok " means " much " ; perhaps they had christened the Captain thus because there was so much of him.

This day they were separated by a lady, as men have been parted by woman from times immemorial. The separatrix was twenty years old and delightful to behold, a symphony of youth, grace, beauty and devilry. She was dressed in a short skirt of red flannel, pretty Vienna shoes, black silk stockings, and a richly embroidered blue Bulgarian bodice, with gilt ornaments; her superb black hair fell across her shoulders, and a fez showed her handsome face to advantage. Her complexion was light and spotless, her hands were white and shapely. She was an inveterate cigarette-smoker ; she liked cigars when she could get them, and did not disdain a pipe ; she could drink slivovitz (plum-brandy) with the best of Milan's subjects. She had a predilection for men with ready cash, and would snub a poor devil unmercifully. For concentrated essence of vanity, conceit, and impudence she has no equal in my experience.

This lady was—laugh not, dear reader !—a nurse. I am perfectly serious : she was, if you please, a professional Sister of Mercy.

She was Servian by birth, Austrian on the father's side; was called Marie by the Bulgarians, Mariam by the Turks; and had served in the war of 1876 on her own side, though history is conveniently silent as to her abilities and performances. All I know is that she had quarrelled with her people, who had escorted her across the frontier. She had offered her services to the Turks, but the ungallant surgeon-in-chief of Osman's army would have none of her. She lived in Widdin town, had occasional access to the fort and interviews with men in authority. All this makes me think that she was utilised as a spy. A fortnight later she was sent under escort to Philippopolis; why, I know not.

My neighbour said: "Ask the mad Englishman to join us; he is rich, and will pay your bill." Whereupon I issued an invitation to the trio, which was accepted by the gentlemen, declined by the lady, who had just dined; but she was condescending enough to say that she would keep us company. She seated herself on the edge of a table which the soldiers had brought for serving the dishes, swung her shapely legs, and expressed vehement regret that the silly fort regulations forbade smoking in this particular spot.

Hardly had we commenced with the soup when a fat pasha took it into his stupid head to step up to the parapet with his telescope. Spiteful fate would have it that he selected the only spot from which our table was visible. His broad back, bulging stern, and O-shaped little legs presented a delightful picture.

Immediately there was silence.

The captain whispered: "He is the greediest pig in Rumili" (Turkey-in-Europe). "Invite him, and he will come, as he always does when he can get a

blow-out gratis ; then we shall be quite safe, as he will be responsible."

I received a nod of approval from the kaim-makam, went up to the Pasha, saluted, and said—

" May your Excellency have a long life ! I am an Englishman in the service of the Padishah, and this is the natal day of my sovereign, the Queen of England " (which was a wicked lie) ; " will your Excellency graciously condescend to partake of the miserable fare which your Excellency's abject servant has spread upon yonder humble table ? "

One grave look at the table, one deliberate sniff of the soup's delicious aroma, and the fat Pasha, solemnly and reverently, made answer and said—

" I will."

The guests rose : the soldiers saluted, the Englishman touched his cap, the German doffed his antiquated tile ; the Pasha took the seat of honour, and began to gobble up the soup with alarming vehemence. Marie had disappeared; partial to young lieutenants with ready money, she had a holy horror of pashas. I heard her parting " Do svidania," which is Servian for *au revoir*.

The men in the courtyard had finished their labours and were resting in the tents ; the gunners and the infantry in the protected way were dozing ; only the measured tread of the sentries on the outer wall broke the sleepy summer-noon silence. The sunshine flooded the river and the landscape beyond with molten gold, and a thousand diamonds glittered on the crests of the Danube's gentle billows. The waves broke themselves lazily against the stone embankment, and whispered softly and sweetly, as if of peace on earth and goodwill to men.

And this was war ! The declaration of hostilities

was a fortnight old, and we were as yet in perfect peace. Not a shot had been fired with hostile intent. My sword was innocent of gore ; my revolver-bullets had hit nothing more animated than the hideous wooden Russian who served as a target. Eleven weeks more were to elapse before either received its baptism.

Presently the sailing-boat came down to a level with Calafat, close to the Roumanian shore, and hoisted the Austrian flag ; a boat manned by soldiers was rowed alongside, and cast off again after a brief interval, while the sailer floated down stream like a beautiful white dove.

We had consumed the second course, capital river-fish obtained in town and cooked in the fort kitchen ; the third (mutton and rice), the fourth (maize porridge), both from the fort, the latter served with honey, and the fifth (pastry and sweets from the confectioner) had followed the same downward career. I had paid the bills, to which Captain Chock generously contributed half ; the officers had left us, having duties to attend to ; we four—that is, the Englishman, the Doctor, the Pasha, and I—were discussing coffee, and brandy from the Captain's flask, of which latter the Turk also partook, saying that the hekim had so ordered it.

I cannot state the exact time, but estimate the moment at 4 p.m., when a gun was fired on our left, followed soon by other reports on both sides of the river—that is, in Calafat and in the extreme north-east of Widdin, where also the monitors were at that moment. After this sharp outbreak the fire ceased.

I cannot describe to you the sudden, overwhelming change wrought in my surroundings by these shots. Within the twinkling of an eye the fort was like a disturbed ants' nest. Soldiers seemed to spring out of

the ground, commands and bugle-calls came from all sides ; but only a few minutes of indescribable turmoil, and Fort Widdin was ready for the fray. Every semblance of peace had vanished, and the grim reality of war stamped each detail of the scene as far as my eyes could travel.

The artillerymen stood by their guns (long since trained to bear on Calafat), waiting only for the order to fire ; the infantry were behind the parapet, rifles in hand. Orderlies and aides-de-camp ran to and fro ; pashas strained their eyes, and numerous telescopes were directed towards the rebellious neighbour. The terrace was crowded with men—some hundreds within my line of vision. Every one was at his post ; for elaborate instructions had been issued even before the declaration of war. The first few moments of unavoidable confusion over, order, coolness, silence and readiness reigned supreme.

The first shot had been fired by us (from Ghazi Bair Tabiya, the most north-easterly of our redoubts, and the one nearest to Calafat), partly by way of test or challenge, to which Calafat immediately responded, partly as a sign to the other batteries. In the beginning it was only Yeni Tabiya, Ghazi Bair Tabiya, and the monitors which fired ; but soon the whole river-front was engaged.

The Pasha had vanished ; the Doctor doffed his hat and ran away, looking like a scared cockroach ; Captain Chock and I glanced at each other across the deserted table in blank surprise. The train-soldiers appeared who had served us, and whom the Captain and I had tipped handsomely, and in the twinkling of an eye every trace of the harmless orgie had vanished. The Captain exclaimed excitedly—

"You'll excuse me, sir, but there's copy to be had for my paper. I'm off. Take my advice, and hurry back to your battalion; it is, perhaps, not necessary, but it'll look well, and will be placed to your credit. Pardon the liberty, but I'm an old soldier. Thanks for hospitality. Good afternoon."

He stuck his formidable pencil behind his ear, waved his note-book over his head, cried "Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" opened his parasol, pulled his cap over one ear, and was off.

At that moment a gun was fired in Ghazi Bair Tabiya, and immediately afterwards the earth was shaken by a terrific discharge of the batteries on the river-side. I ran to the gate as fast as the thick smoke would allow. The sentry stopped me, and called the officer on duty; having satisfactorily explained my business to the latter, I was allowed to proceed. I hurried through the streets, which were crowded with trembling inhabitants—Turks, Jews, Bulgarians—race-hatred and fanaticism having disappeared before the one common consideration: safety of life and home. Numerous windows were broken; a filigree-worker's hovel had tumbled on its palsied foundations; the vagrant dogs howled in nerve-straining unison. At that moment the guns were silent; a little later there was a vigorous discharge from Calafat and a terrific response from Widdin; after that the fire was continued in a less furious and spasmodic manner for an hour or two, and then all was over for the day. Only slight damage was done to one of our redoubts and to the river-front, and there were no serious casualties. In Widdin two insignificant fires broke out, and the top of a minaret tumbled into a back yard. I believe not many of our shells reached the enemy, but they had

the desired moral effect: they proved to the foe that we were ready for the fray, prevented him from attacking, and neutralised for seven months a hostile division.

I thought for a moment of looking up Doris and comforting her; but "Duty before love," said I. I pushed my way through the panic-stricken crowd, lost myself in the crooked streets, and finally gained the gates, where I had again to state my business to the guard. Once free of the town I hurried along the level road, already tramped by fugitives, doing the two and a half miles in little more than half an hour, and arriving in camp at 5.30 or 6, *i.e.* three hours before my leave was up.

The first shot fired from Calafat was, politically and historically, a fact of the gravest importance, one that shaped the course of events for decades, probably centuries, to come. It dispelled all doubts as to Roumania's attitude; it broke the ties that bound the vassal State to the sovereign country; it signified for the Widdin army the commencement of hostilities, the certainty of being separated only by a river from an enemy ready and eager to fight. It meant for Roumania independence from the Porte, her mistress during three and a half centuries, and (in any case temporary) subjugation to the Czar's will; it meant for Turkey another enemy to reckon with; for Russia, an only too anxious ally to count upon.

In camp two brigades stood ready. The battalions had been formed in marching order; the men squatted on the ground, arms piled; the officers were anxiously waiting for the command to start. The major looked at me approvingly; the captain (asleep on a convenient stone) opened his little green eyes, blinked them, and continued his siesta. I took my station at the head of

my squad. Presently I was bidden to the brigadier, to whom I gave an account of what I had seen in Widdin. We waited, but no orders came. Calafat and Widdin were quiet, like two neighbours, friends for years, who have had a few words and have shaken hands. Even the most zealous officers grew tired and sat or lay down. Towards 9 p.m. the order was given to turn in. Dispirited, we sought our beds; sleep was out of the question. Afterwards we got so used to the cannonade that it disturbed our minds no longer; we would hardly listen to it. We had, however, a good many false alarms.

A few days later I had my first outpost duty, my company being sent to a hill five miles north-west of the camp, five miles south-west of the Danube, and seven miles south-east of the Servian frontier, whence we could overlook twenty-five miles of the river and fifteen miles of the Servian boundary-line. The eminence is 400 feet above Danube level, and commands a fine view on all sides. My squad bivouacked for some days on different spots of the slope. I made the Bulgarian inhabitants of the neighbouring hamlets serve us hot dinners. I used to try persuasion and kindness first—for instance, kissing the children; if these were of no avail (not often), I used compulsion; but I checked rigorously every approach towards brutality. The Roumanians had run away. We knocked at many a house, and, getting no reply, beat the doors in, and found a good many things likely to be of service to us, such as blankets, bolsters, utensils, &c. At night the company had three outposts, each of half a squad, and each setting a dozen single sentries. We lieutenants had the duty of inspecting the latter, a disagreeable task in the darkness, which caused me

many a nasty stumble and a scratched face. Nothing occurred. We were glad when another company relieved us, and we could go back to our comfortable tents. Then we had for a week the duty to provide part of the camp sentries, and I was several times in charge of the guard at one of the gates, where I had to use all my wits to prevent unauthorised persons from entering. There were always scores of claimants for admission—pedlars, messengers, petitioners of some kind or other, complainants, beggars, gipsy performers, vagabonds. I had to arrest several too anxious claimants, who were dismissed with the caution not to do it again, save one young Bulgarian, who, savouring of a spy, was detained for several days, and finally liberated. The women, having something to sell or wishing to see some one, were particularly difficult to get rid of; many a pretty girl tried to bribe me with honeyed words and attempted caresses; but I thought of Doris and was kiss-proof. When this duty was over my company was not called upon for several weeks. Towards the middle of June we had a fortnight's bivouacking on the river-bank between Flortin and Widdin, not far from Koshava; but again the record of our performances was a blank, except that we captured a Roumanian fishing-boat, with a net of freshly caught fish, which had probably broken loose from her moorings on the other side. We ate the fish and chopped the craft up for firewood, after having utilised it for a picnic on a small, uninhabited island, within 500 yards of the hostile shore. We bathed daily in the river, and caught excellent fish. The mosquitoes began to be troublesome; but after a week or two of nocturnal torment they deserted me, and my face resumed its legitimate proportions. Possibly the fact that my skin underwent

a curing and tanning process — my complexion was mahogany—was the cause of the insects' change of front. We came across an apiary in a cottager's deserted garden; a man who understood bees drove them away by exploding cartridges, and procured us a supply of lovely honey.

After our return to camp my company had no more out-post duties until we came to Plevna.

I must mention our sentry dogs, of which the Inova camp had nearly a hundred, some few trained for the purpose; the majority belonged to the canine "submerged tenth" which is a specialty of Turkey, and had attached and educated themselves.

Ibrahim and his colour squad were exempt from outpost and sentry duties. I became much attached to Jack Seymour, and in youthful enthusiasm and love of romance we swore eternal friendship.

The shelling had been renewed every second or third day, sometimes for a few minutes, sometimes for hours. The damage done to the fortifications was always immediately repaired; for we had plenty of engineers, mechanics, and workmen in Widdin. Not so with the town. Fires broke out frequently, sometimes several simultaneously; for want of a regular fire-brigade the soldiers were called upon to quench the conflagrations. Once (on June 3) matters grew so serious that troops were sent from camp, among them my battalion. The fire had been mastered by the time we arrived (towards dusk), but the cannonade continued till 9 p.m. A shell burst 100 feet from me, and killed a Turkish woman and her baby who had come out to have a look at us. I obtained an hour's leave and hastened to Doris, whose house had not been struck. The old man was frightened out of his wits, the girl brave and confident; her

affection for her grandfather and the way she comforted and caressed him were beautiful and touching. I pointed out to them that they were tolerably safe, being sheltered by a tall, solid mosque; that the only danger to which they were exposed came from the minaret, should it tumble. Up to the time of my leaving Widdin no harm had come to them. When I mentioned business, the old Jew shook himself, and was at once on the alert. I exchanged a fifty-lira draft on Constantinople for cash, and bought a ring of him, which I presented to Doris. Needless to say we kissed and swore eternal love, as young people will do as long as this globe travels its orbit.

Widdin looked deserted; a general exodus had commenced with, and even before, the cannonade. Files of trucks and barrows passed the camp almost daily, laden with household goods; families who could obtain no vehicular accommodation carried their belongings on their backs. Many a time have I seen a strapping Bulgarian smoking his pipe and burdened with nothing more formidable than, perhaps, a clock or an ikon, whilst his wife groaned under a cartload of boxes, bundles, bedding, and babies. The fugitives took shelter in the villages out of shell range, or camped out; near Inova there was quite a colony of huts, made of broken up furniture, sacking, or whatever material might be handy. It was mostly the Bulgarians who fled; Turks and Jews stayed, trusting in the Mushir to protect them. The numerous Roumanians in the villages around Widdin decamped without exception; I suppose they crossed the river secretly at night, and joined their countrymen, or did so *viâ* Servian territory.

Nearly every street had a partially wrecked house,

and there was not a whole pane in Widdin ; but, taking it altogether, the cannonade was more formidable in its aspect than in its effect. Towards the end of June the shelling on both sides grew lax and spasmodic, the leaders recognising its uselessness. I believe it ceased after we had left. I do not think we did much damage to Calafat.

We had not many casualties, perhaps 100 killed and wounded during the whole time, including peaceful inhabitants. The camps were out of range. Altogether, the result of two months' shelling was, on both sides, *nil*.

Meanwhile the soldiers began to grow disheartened at their uselessness and inactivity, and the dissatisfaction with those who compelled us to be idle, *i.e.* the Council of War in the capital and the Serdar Ekrem in Shumla, became intense. We were kept posted as to what was going on ; the news came from the superior officers downward, and were thus disseminated in camp. The papers also gave us information, though this was generally too stale and too one-sided to be of practical value.

In Europe the enemy had been uniformly fortunate, and was invading Bulgaria unhindered ; in Asia, after the first quick and cheap successes, he had lost a big battle (Sevin, June 25), and had been driven back to the frontier-line ; whilst great hopes were being built upon the rebellion of the Russian Mahomedans and the activity of the Ottoman fleet, commanded by an Englishman (Hobart Pasha). But we in Widdin had to do only with affairs in Europe, and the unchecked invasion of the Empire's fairest province made us grind our teeth and utter curses loud and deep. The Widdin army, the best of the country

next to Suleiman Pasha's corps, did not relish looking on idle whilst the enemy was having it all his own way. Inactivity is more unnerving than hardship, and a lost battle generally demoralises the onlookers even more than those who have actually been beaten.

It became known in camp that the Mushir had submitted to the Council of War plans for a flank attack upon the Russian forces invading Bulgaria. Sistova had fallen and Nikopoli was threatened. Osman wisely recognised that Widdin had lost much of its strategical importance, being now an isolated outpost, in which an army of 30,000 men, in splendid condition and anxious to fight, was retained in dispiriting idleness in order to keep a single hostile division in check.

Early on July 8 it was made known that a march eastward was in contemplation. It was reported that the Mushir had been in personal telegraphic consultation with the Padishah during the night. The joy of the troops was great, and every man had but one concern: lest his battalion might unfortunately be among those left behind to protect Widdin. Our preparations were made with method and promptness. There was not much to be done; ever since the declaration of war we had been in condition to take the field. Within twenty-four hours we were ready to start; but we had some days more of uncertainty and suspense to go through.

On the 11th the Mushir's plans were communicated to the officers: To march with half the Widdin army to Nikopoli, where Hassan Hairi Pasha commanded ten battalions, and which was threatened with an attack (from Krüdener's 9th Corps); to unite ourselves with these ten battalions, which were to evacuate

Nikopoli, as it had lost its importance since the fall of Sistova; to attack the enemy's flank between Biéla and Tirnova and break through his thin line; to form a junction with the East Bulgarian Corps, and to offer a decisive battle. Should Osman not be successful in breaking through the hostile line, Lovdcha was given as the point of retreat, as well as the starting-point for future offensive operations. After two and a half months of dreary inactivity, a week after Osman had made it, his proposal received at last the supreme sanction—just too late, as events proved.

Major Taki told me that the Mushir had submitted, between April 24 and July 11, five elaborately worked-out projects for utilising his army for an offensive movement, of which only the last had received a tardy approval. Twice he had been left without a reply!

Arrangements connected with supply kept us in Widdin for two days longer. Early on July 12 marching orders were given out, and the composition and arrangement of the column were fixed; but the hour of departure was left uncertain. To my gratification my battalion was among those commanded to join the expeditionary force. At noon there was a parade of the latter and inspection by the Mushir.

Twelve battalions of infantry, a squadron of regular cavalry, and a field battery remained in Widdin with the fort artillery, under Mehemed Isset Pasha. Four battalions of Osman's army had been distributed among the following places: Rakovitza, Bregovo, Adlié (*alias* Kula), Flortin, Artzar, Biélogradchik, Berkovitza; three were in Lom Palankah, and three in Rahova, which places had also their fort artillery; lastly, three were between Rahova and the spot where the Isker flows into the Danube, near Beshti.

The Mushir's column counted 19 battalions, 6 squadrons, 9 batteries, or 12,000 men with 54 guns.*

This gives the total of the Widdin army at forty-four battalions. After the termination of the Servian War Osman concentrated sixty battalions; sixteen he had to send to East Bulgaria in the beginning of the year; thus he had forty-four left.

In the afternoon of the 12th I obtained an hour's leave, borrowed a horse, and rode to town, where I took a hasty farewell from heartbroken Doris.

At nine in the evening an order was issued fixing four next morning as the time of departure.

During the night of July 12–13 we slept for the last time in the Widdin tents, ready to start at daybreak.

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

FROM WIDDIN TO PLEVNA: A SEVEN DAYS' FORCED MARCH

July 13 *to* 19, 1877

We were up at sunrise on Friday, July 13, and had our last meal in Widdin camp—hot meat and rice. Each soldier carried a week's biscuit rations.

The day opened cloudless, and promised to be as scorching as its predecessors. It surpassed anticipations. Throughout the march the heat was intense and uninterrupted.

At four the first battalions left camp; mine followed an hour later. The troops remaining behind bade us an enthusiastic and envious farewell.

At seven we came to the Artzar road, the place of tryst, where we met the cavalry and some battalions coming from town, and the artillery from the Smerdan camp. The Mushir and his staff joined us here, and the column was formed. There was a delay of some hours.

A party from Widdin had come to bid us good-bye. Among them was Doris, who gave me a flask of Cognac, a packet of eatables, and a note with the words, "Gott beschütze Dich." I felt sentimental. That was the last I saw of pretty Doris of Widdin.

At nine the advanced guard started. My battalion was in the rear, with four other battalions, in charge of the carts and pack-horses.

We took the road which leads from Widdin to Artzar along the Danube. Some vagabonds followed us, but were dispersed by the regulars, several being knocked down and wounded. The Circassians could not be trusted to do this, as they were always in sympathy with marauders. Later during the march some of these creatures were killed for plundering soldiers who had dropped from fatigue.

As we approached Vidbol we heard the report of guns. We found that it proceeded from Roumanian batteries established on the opposite bank, which had shelled us without doing harm: the distance was too great. When we arrived on the heights of Vidbol I had a view of the winding column, which was ten miles long and presented a striking and imposing picture. The Roumanians continued their pyrotechnic amusements until the last man had passed out of range.

At eight in the evening we arrived without mishap in Artzar, where we bivouacked for the night. Here we heard that, instead of continuing by the Lom Palankah river-road, according to the Mushir's original intention, we were to proceed by the Topolovatz path, the same by which I had come two and a half months before.

Hitherto we had travelled by a good road, with a constant supply of water, and had experienced no inconvenience, save that arising from the heat. The hardships commenced in earnest next day, and ended only when we struck the Rahova road in Gorna Netropolié, ten miles west of Plevna; for we travelled by footpaths and bridle-paths, not on regular roads (except

the short stretch from Topolovatz to Krivodol), in a bare, shelterless country, where water is scarce.

The van started again at daybreak (July 14), we at five. The men had to drag the guns and carts up the hills. The heat became intense ; the dust choked us.

Between Artzar and Plevna we in the rear had only biscuits to eat, except what little we could obtain by persuasion or compulsion in the villages, as the men were too tired to cook when we arrived at the halting-places. The rear was the worst off, for when we passed through a hamlet there was often not a crust left. The Turkish inhabitants were kind-hearted and obliging. At Sergeant Bakal's recommendation I abstained from fruit.

From Topolovatz to Krivodol we travelled by the Biélogradchik-Lom Palankah road. At five in the afternoon we came to Krivodol, ten miles south of Lom Palankah, on the Lom, where we had in any case an abundance of water. After having had a bath and a few biscuits I lay down, but was roused an hour later by the major, who told us officers that the Mushir had received despatches from Constantinople, stating that the Russians had crossed the Balkans and were threatening Kazanlik and Yeni Zagra ; that we were to break up at dusk and march all night.

These fatal news, and worse which arrived later, were communicated to the troops. The Balkans lost, and that almost without a fight—the Empire's bulwark, believed to be impregnable, gone ! We could hardly credit it.

It was Gourko's audacious passage of the Balkans by bridle-paths on July 12 and 13 which the Padishah referred to. This bold feat enabled the Russians to attack the weak Turkish force in the Shipka Pass from the rear, drive it off, and occupy this important defile,

from which they were never dislodged. Not a Suleiman's impetuosity, not the sacrifice of the best army Turkey has ever had, could dispossess them.

We started at 10 p.m. and marched throughout the night, morning, and forenoon (July 15). The tramp through the darkness was interesting and romantic. At noon we reached Vultchiderma, on the Chibritza, where we halted. The main body, unhampered by train, had arrived some hours before the rear. After having had a drink of water we all fell down where we stood, and were soon in a death-like slumber. Sergeant Bakal was the only man of my squad who did not appear to be affected. To his foresight, care, and wondrous powers of endurance it is due that my men did not become disheartened. We had not even a deserter in the rear, for his watchful eye was ever open.

When I woke up, some time in the evening, I was told that the Mushir had received a despatch from Abdul Kerim, saying that Nikopoli was being attacked by a strong force; that the utmost speed was necessary, not only to save Nikopoli, but also Plevna and Lovdcha, the former of which was occupied by Atouf Pasha with three battalions, four guns, and 200 Circassians, the latter only by a few companies and some irregulars; that the Mushir had decided to make straight for Plevna. I do not know whether Osman despaired of being in time to save Nikopoli, or whether he intended to form a junction with Atouf and attack Krüdener in the rear.

This was the first time I heard the name "Plevna." Little did I think that it would become as famous as Sebastopol or Metz; that I should spend nearly five months of dangers and privations in helping to defend it for, and against, strangers. Later, in Russia, I learnt

that the Czar had consulted a gipsy before the war as to its probable result, and that the oracle had said: "Beware of Plevna!"

Our hardships had been great hitherto, but worse were to follow; for now we were to pass through a country which is a Sahara in its dearth of water during a hot summer.

At midnight three battalions (1st Regiment, Col. Emin Bey) started in advance for Plevna, to assist Atouf Pasha in holding the town until the arrival of the bulk of the force. These reached their destination on the 18th, thus doing the distance from Widdin to Plevna (115 miles) in six days, an average of nineteen miles a day.

We started at four in the morning (July 16), with a twenty-four mile stage, almost waterless, before us. The Mushir's dispositions were now evident. At points arranged beforehand a mounted party with three-horse carts, going in advance of the column, established tubs with drinking-water. Vehicles requisitioned in the villages accompanied the rear, to pick up the men who had dropped *en route*. On both flanks was cavalry; for the Cossacks had swarmed as far as Rahova, Altimir, and Vratza. Cooking-parties were sent in advance, and when the main body arrived at prearranged spots they found a meal waiting; but we in the rear, lagging behind with a lumbering train, did not come in for this benefit. A worse feature was that when we reached the water-tubs they were generally empty, or filled with a fluid grown so putrid that we officers had to prevent the men from drinking. But Sergeant Bakal managed capitally for my squad; it would occupy too long to enumerate his dispositions and precautions. Also, the experience which Seymour, Tereb, and I had

gained during the Bellova-Widdin tramp (child's play compared to the one under discussion) stood us in good stead. Only once did I feel faint, and I was not in the least footsore, thanks to frequent grease embrocations. Jack also was tolerably well; but Ibrahim had a long ride on a cart. Lieutenant Hardar displayed no trace of even fatigue, and the captain marched with closed eyes, half asleep, but perfectly hale. There were a dozen stragglers in my company by the time we reached Gorna Netropolié, but they rejoined us there.

Five or six men of the main body, whom the rear-guard found among those lying by the side of the track, it was not necessary to pick up: they were dead. There was not the time nor had we the strength to bury them; after having taken their money and arms, we left their bodies to the tender mercies of the local "Christians." Jack and I used to utter a short prayer, to the captain's amusement, who said, "You will soon weary of that"; but Hardar and Tereb looked at us approvingly, and the men liked it. A fortnight later I had seen hundreds of human corpses without having one pious thought.

Many of the packhorses and cart-oxen fell from fatigue, and had to be left to their fate.

Of the men's spirits I cannot judge: firstly, because we were all too exhausted to betray any mental characteristics, good, bad, or indifferent; secondly, because I was too tired and too miserable to make observations. We trudged on in silence, without jokes, stories, or songs. The major formed, once or twice, the eight drummers of his four companies into a band, to which some amateurs with tin whistles were added; but the former fell down with fatigue, and the fifes got choked with dust, and after half an hour only one

drummer was left, who continued mechanically, in his draggletail wretchedness, to mark every second step by a faint beat, without knowing it.

Towards midnight we came to Altimir, on the Skit, more dead than alive, where we bivouacked for the night. Our sufferings during the preceding stage from heat, dust, fatigue, thirst, hunger (we could not swallow the biscuits), had been awful. Next morning (July 17) the soldiers were still in such a state of exhaustion that the departure was deferred till the afternoon. At 4 p.m. we started, refreshed after our long rest, and arrived at midnight in Keniéja.

At this spot two items of grave news reached us :

Firstly, a battalion from Rahova and two battalions stationed originally west of Nikopoli had been found waiting for the column ; the latter had been driven from their positions, with considerable loss, by part of the Russian force which had attacked Nikopoli two days before (July 15). We heard from them that Nikopoli was being furiously shelled and stormed, and was in a precarious condition. This reinforcement, with the three battalions and four guns found in Plevna, brought our force up to twenty-five battalions and fifty-eight guns, which was our strength in the battle of July 20.

Secondly, we heard in the night from Circassians that Lovdcha had been occupied by the enemy on July 16. I was told that Osman had been much upset by these news, as he considered Lovdcha of the utmost strategical importance. By the Mushir's orders the troops were informed of this misfortune, and of the necessity now incumbent upon us to occupy Plevna, so as to save the Empire from collapse.

We started in the early morning (July 18), and

marched without interruption, through an absolutely bare and uninhabited country, until at midday we came to the river Isker, opposite Mahulleta. Here a piece of news awaited us worse than any we had yet heard: that Nikopoli had fallen on July 16, after a heroic resistance, and that its garrison of ten battalions, its 400 heavy guns, and its enormous stores of grain, clothing, ammunition and arms were in the enemy's hands. These tidings were communicated to the troops, with the remark that the country was lying in its death-agonies, and that it was our sacred task to save it.

Major Taki told me that the Mushir was not much concerned about the fall of Nikopoli (save for the loss of its ten battalions, on which he had reckoned); that he had taken the news with equanimity, whilst those concerning Lovdcha had roused and grieved him deeply.

We heard also that the Russian headquarters had been transferred to Tirnova (July 17), and that the Czar had arrived there; that the Russians were invading East Roumelia and inciting the Christians to rebellion. In fact, at that moment Gourko was having it all his own way, and a terrible "Hannibal ad portas" struck fear into all hearts at Adrianople and Constantinople.

There was no bridge across the Isker, the three battalions sent in advance having forded it. We had no pontoon train. With submerged carts and boards placed across our men had constructed a bridge. The rivers which we had crossed between the Lom and the Isker had all been practically waterless, a common occurrence in North-West Bulgaria during a hot summer.

The bulk of our column started after only a few hours' rest. We of the rear took things more leisurely, on account of the extreme fatigue of the beasts. We

started at 6 p.m., and arrived in Gorna Netropolié, ten miles west of Plevna, at midnight. Here the main body had already bivouacked, having encountered a company sent from Plevna with the news that Cossacks were swarming in the neighbourhood, and that strong forces were approaching on the Nikopoli road. An order of the Mushir was read out, informing us that he expected to meet the enemy on the morrow. We were arranged in battle order and slept arms in hand. The probability of being under fire for the first time on the morrow did not prevent Jack and me from having a sound rest; but many men confessed next morning to having been sleepless, notwithstanding fatigue.

The bulk of the force started at 5 a.m. (July 19), the train some hours later. Owing to the speed with which the main body had marched, the tail of the column, with its crawling beasts of burden, was left far behind. During this last stage the rear was ready to repel an attack at a second's notice, but encountered no enemy. Later, we heard that the van had a skirmish with a detachment of Cossacks.

During the forenoon the Circassians attached to the rear-guard, who swarmed on both flanks, reported having come across a deserted Cossack camp two miles to the north. Some horse-carts were given to them, and, accompanied by a squadron of regulars (to prevent stealing), they returned to the spot and brought back the baggage of three squadrons. The Cossacks must have quitted their encampment in a desperate hurry, for almost everything was found. Prompted by Bakal, I advised the captain to obtain the water-bottles for his company, which he did. One was given to each man, so that we had now two flasks

per person, which came in handy during the battle of July 20. Bread-bags were also distributed.

This incident caused the delay of an hour or two. Another and longer delay was occasioned by cattle food running short; foraging parties had to be sent to the villages and farms.

At one o'clock we heard the report of guns, which never ceased from this moment until nightfall, and grew louder as we approached our destination. Fearing that the Russians would undertake an attack upon Plevna, and that ammunition might run short, the colonel divided the train into two portions: the first, consisting of the packhorses with infantry ammunition, and the artillery ammunition carts, with three battalions (including mine), one and a half batteries, one squadron, and the Circassians, hurrying on in advance; the packhorses with luggage and stores, and the carts with their slow oxen, guarded by three battalions, one battery and one squadron, lumbering on behind as best they could. Despite all our haste the tired, overburdened horses detained us; it was past 2 p.m. before we arrived at the stone bridge by means of which the Orkanyé-Plevna road crosses the Vid. Behind a bend of this road—on the right of which is a hill covered with vineyards and orchards—we came in sight of Plevna, which, lying in a deep, fertile valley, presented a strikingly beautiful picture with its minarets and domes, its white houses, its patches of foliage, its background of hills. At 4 p.m. we marched, or rather dragged ourselves, into the town without having seen an enemy, whilst the batteries on the northern and eastern hills greeted us with their acclamations. The other half of the rear arrived during the night.

The main body had reached Plevna between 9 a.m.

and 2 p.m. The troops had not remained in town, save for a hurried meal, except two battalions to guard the place against surprises. The remainder had taken the positions on the hills previously assigned to them by Atouf Pasha, and approved of by the Mushir after reconnoitring the neighbourhood. Atouf had collected a large stock of victuals, cattle, and forage in Plevna, and hot meals had been prepared for the column. The Russian guns (six batteries) shelled the Turkish positions without doing harm, and no attack was undertaken. As soon as the Turkish batteries could be got into position they returned the fire. This artillery duel lasted eight hours, without result to either side. At nightfall the Russians retreated, bivouacking in four separate detachments near Ribina, Verbitza, Sgalevitza, and Tultchenitza.

The artillery of our Second Division had been increased by Atouf's four guns, and 100 Circassians were added to each division. The total of our force was now twenty-five battalions, nine and a half batteries, six squadrons; or, 15,000 men with fifty-eight guns.*

Our left wing consisted of thirteen battalions and four batteries. (This includes my battalion and another, which took up positions early next morning.)

The centre was formed by five battalions, with one and a half batteries.

The right wing consisted of four battalions, two batteries, and the greater part of the cavalry.

The reserve was formed by three battalions and two batteries.

The left-wing had an extreme outpost (two battalions and a battery) in front of Opanetz; also, two battalions and a battery in and behind Bukova; the

* For additional *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

bulk (nine battalions, including mine, and two batteries) was on the summit and the slope of the hill called Janik Bair. The whole of the left wing faced north.

The centre stood on the extreme east of the Janik Bair, a mile north-west of Grivitza, facing north, north-east, and east.

The right wing stood on the hills south of the Bulgareni road (the cavalry on the road itself), facing east and south-east.

The reserves stood on a hill immediately east of the town, close to headquarters. One battalion guarded the town by posting itself in its extreme south, where the Lovdcha high-road and the road from Krishin enter it.

I believe the tactical formations got somewhat mixed; for instance, the other two battalions of my regiment were in the right wing. I presume the cause was that the battalions as they arrived in Plevna were hurriedly directed to the most exposed and dangerous places under the impression of the approach and the cannonade of the enemy without reference to tactical formations. This was amended before the battle of July 30.

The distance of 115 miles between Widdin and Plevna had occupied the column seven days, or sixteen miles a day. We had ten deaths from exhaustion and 10 per cent. of invalids (all told), mostly footsore; the feet of some men were one ghastly wound. The country through which we had travelled is partly undulating, partly flat, and undoubtedly pretty in many places; but its monotony grew wearisome. Heat, drought, and dust had robbed the landscape of the freshness of its tints; the merciless sunshine was a torture to the eyes, and we were too exhausted to be impressed by beauties of scenery, even if they had been

of the highest order. We passed not a single important town, all the places which I have mentioned being hamlets. We found many traces of last year's rebellion, in ruins, deserted dwellings, depopulated districts.

The colonel commanding the rear column rode to headquarters, established in a tent on a hill immediately east of Plevna, to obtain instructions. Meanwhile we lay down in the streets, and men of Atouf's battalions dealt out coffee, bread, and tobacco, and the remainder of the meal of meat and rice prepared for the main body. When the colonel returned, he brought us the welcome news that we were to stay in town during the night. Sergeant Bakal, in anticipation of this order, had gone on a tour of discovery through the streets, and had noticed some deserted houses in the northern suburb, which the major selected for our night-quarters. An order was issued to the battalions of the rear that we were to march at dawn, to take a position in the expected line of battle. The sergeants obtained material for supper. The worst invalids (only three in my company, two so footsore as to be paralyzed, one ill through exhaustion; all three recovered within a few days) were sent to an ambulance, and immediate steps were taken to ease and cure all men suffering in the feet. Next day my company left one other man in Plevna, so that we had four absentees in the battle. We went to the house assigned to us, beat the door in, and made ourselves confortable, cannonade notwithstanding.

Plevna (Turkish, correctly Plavna or Pilavna, with the accent on the last syllable), or Pleven (Bulgarian), counted in 1877 17,000 inhabitants, 10,000 of whom were Christians. Between July 9 and 20, 2000 Mahomedans from the districts invaded by the Russians had

taken refuge in the town, which contained also 200 soldiers wounded in the engagements near Sistova and Nikopoli. Four thousand Christians had fled.

The Tultchenitza (or Cayalidéré) brook flows through the town, whilst the Grivitza skirts its northern margin. The two streams unite two miles north-west of the town, and a mile farther north-west, near Opanetz, they empty their waters into the Vid, a tributary of the Danube.

Plevna was better built than any other Turkish town I had seen; yet here, too, there were the ruined and deserted houses, the waste spaces full of rubbish, which are a feature of the country. The filthy streets, badly paved or unpaved, and in wet weather impassable, the absence of sanitary arrangements, the thousand-and-one stenches characteristic of urban Turkey, were worthily represented. The Tultchenitza served as a natural (and only) main drain. The town is built without any obvious plan; but the streets were wider and straighter, the houses better, than, say, in Widdin. There were some really nice buildings; for instance, the Konak (or official residence) of the kaim-makam (lieutenant-colonel, a title given to Civil Governors of a district), erected, so I was told, on the site and with the material of a Roman ruin. Many of the dwelling-houses, both Turkish and Bulgarian, were pretty, and charmingly situated in their gardens. The town had a civil hospital—Midhat Pasha's creation—presided over by a German doctor; two inns, with something faintly resembling European hotel accommodation; a large khan for accommodating ox-caravans; a clock-tower, eighteen mosques, two Christian churches, a rushdié (military elementary school), eight ordinary elementary Turkish and five Bulgarian schools. In

the neighbourhood there were some good chiftliks (farms).

Plevna was the administrative capital of a district, of which Nikopoli and Sistova were the other important places. It was on July 20, 1877, an absolutely open town, there being no fortifications of any kind. The fortified stone-convent, the blockhouse, the fortified Vid bridge, and other things mentioned by German, French, and Russian writers, are fables.

The town is surrounded by hills, those in the north-east and east being the highest. Between Vivolar and Verbitza they rise to 1300 feet, a few miles beyond Grivitza to 1000 feet, above sea-level. In the south the Tultchenitza flows through a deep, narrow, rocky ravine with almost vertical banks. Directly north-east of the town there is a hill, perfectly bare, called Janik Bair (" bair " is hill), four miles long, west to east, rising to 350 feet above the Plevna valley, its southern slope bordering upon the Bulgareni road between Plevna and Grivitza, which hill will play an important part in my narrative. The left bank of the Vid also is hilly ; but here the altitude is below that of the right bank, and the slopes are gentler.

From whatever point of the compass Plevna is observed it presents a striking and pleasant picture, forming always the pretty foreground to a bold background of hills. These are in the north, east, and south-east bare, in the north-west, west, and south covered with vineyards, gardens, and orchards. Maize is much cultivated in the neighbourhood.

The Plevna-Sofia road, a construction of Midhat Pasha, is wide, and paved throughout, and was considered the best road in European Turkey. It played a principal *rôle* in the military drama of the defence of

Plevna. It crosses the Balkans by means of the Baba Konak Pass (also called Araba Konak, or Etropol Pass), one of the safest and most commodious of Balkan crossings.

The wire connected Plevna with Rahova and Widdin, with Lovdcha, and with Orkanyé and Sofia, thence with Constantinople. The other (northern and eastern) telegraph-lines had been cut by the Russians.

Midhat's elaborate plans notwithstanding, Plevna had never had a railway. Twenty-five years later, in 1902, the town was at last connected by rail with Rustchuk in the east and Sofia in the south.

At the commencement of hostilities Plevna was occupied by one company of infantry and some gendarmes. On July 8 Cossacks appeared, and the garrison had to retreat to Rahova. They seized hostages and left on the following day, when Atouf Pasha (hitherto attached to the Nikopoli division) arrived, with three battalions and four guns. He took possession of the town without fighting; his force bivouacked on the hills. He drove away (July 10) a Russian advance-guard which appeared on the hills behind Grivitza, organised the irregular cavalry, arranged a reconnoitring and foraging service, collected stores, established ambulances for the invalids coming from Sistova and Nikopoli, and, being informed on July 15 of Osman's approach, prepared everything for his reception.

The well-appointed Bulgarian farmhouse which served as night-quarters for my company had three to four rooms on each floor, with the bulk of furniture remaining in them. The front faced southward, towards the town, the back overlooked hilly and fertile country, with fine vineyards in the west and north-west.

There was a fenced-in front garden, and at the back a well-tended orchard, some 100 yards long, divided from the adjoining fields by a hedge.

At seven we turned in, and supper, consisting of mutton, rice, and turnips, boiled together, was cooked in the spacious kitchen of an outhouse. The batteries on the hills performed the table-music whilst we consumed, or rather devoured, our rations. Biscuits sufficient for a day were given to each man; coffee was made, and the men were instructed to fill one of their flasks; the others were replenished from a well in the orchard with excellent water. I had for my squad a treasure in the shape of two buckets of milk, obtained by my wily friend, Sergeant Bakal—I did not care to inquire how and where. The men were told that they would have no breakfast on the morrow, and possibly no dinner; that they would have to depend on the cold coffee and biscuits they were carrying with them.

After supper cartridges were dealt out from the battalion's ammunition, stored in an adjoining shed. At nine, it being still daylight, muster was called, and the men were instructed to lie down, fully dressed. There was barely necessity for this order: after a seven days' forced march they fell where they stood. Four o'clock was the appointed time of rising; but the major said that we might expect an alarm at an earlier hour.

Towards dusk the cannonade had ceased.

The captain and the first-lieutenant had appropriated a small front room on the ground-floor, Jack, Ibrahim, and I a bed-closet on the first-floor. The first squad and the colour squad occupied the ground-floor, Jack's and my men the top floor. Men slept in the hall, the cellars, on the landings, even on the stairs.

A guard of twelve, under Tereb, watched in the kitchen, placing sentries, relievable every half-hour, at the bottom of the orchard; this guard was to be relieved at midnight, and Jack was to have command of the second watch.

I had a thorough wash. You that have your bath prepared every morning cannot realise the divine luxury of soap and water.

Mehemed invited me to his room for a game of chess, having found the implements in a cupboard; my excuse of fatigue did not avail. The captain was away, at the major's quarters. We heard cavalry ride by, and saw a small body of Circassians, a battery, and a squadron of regulars pass through the street and leave the town in an easterly direction.

At 9.30 I was checkmated and left my companion, just as the captain arrived. He said to me: "To-morrow you will be under fire for the first time; there is every prospect of a serious engagement."

Mehemed Hardar told me afterwards that the captain had been writing for hours, probably to the dear ones at home.

I had a look-in at the kitchen, and found Ibrahim dozing over the Koran. The men were conversing in whispers of the coming fray; several were asleep. At the bottom of the orchard the sentries paced slowly their narrow zone. In the adjoining gardens sentries watched over our ammunition. It was a beautiful, starlit summer night.

It was past ten when I turned in. Jack was asleep, smiling in his dreams. My heart was full, and I wanted to talk to him, but did not like to rouse him. So I lay down beside him, fully dressed, sword and revolver at my elbow.

From all sides came the sound of men breathing in their slumbers; otherwise the house, with its 180 inmates, was perfectly still. The town, too, seemed intensely, unnaturally quiet; neither came any sounds from the environs. It seemed impossible to realise that an area of a few square miles contained 15,000 men ready to slay or to be slain on the morrow. Occasionally the silence was broken by the tramp of a patrol, the neighing of a horse, the change of sentries; once I heard the distant bark of a watchdog, which reminded me, strangely and sadly, of home.

Though I was dead-beat, my eyes refused to close. Sleep seeming impossible, I rose and looked out of the window. The street was deserted. Westward I saw our carts drawn up in a line, with sentries pacing a narrow strip like automata; eastward I perceived numerous bivouac-fires, a mile or more away, undoubtedly those of strong outposts. Evidently nothing had been neglected to guard against surprises. Just then two officers rode up, and another came from the interior of the town. They met below my window, and I heard one report that all was quiet in the bivouacs. They rode away in the direction of the colonel's quarters.

I lay down again and tried, vainly, to sleep. Thoughts of the morrow cropped up in my mind like ugly phantoms. I confess the idea that twenty-four hours later and through all eternity my bed might be the soil unnerved me.

At midnight Ibrahim sent a man; we roused Jack, who put his head into a basin of water and went downstairs, towelling himself with an antimacassar. Tereb came up, and fell asleep immediately, having barely sufficient strength to tell me that nothing had occurred

during his watch. I heard the guard relieved; there was a brief commotion in the house, in adjoining gardens, a few hoarse cries, a few subdued commands, and all was silent again. The dead stillness of night seized me also at last, and I fell into deep slumber.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST BATTLE OF PLEVNA

July 20, 1877

I DREAMT that I heard the train which passes close to the house in my native town; the sound increased in volume to an unwonted extent, and the engine burst into the room—my bedchamber at home. A kick roused me. "Get up! The drums are beating the alarm," shouted Ibrahim. It was nearly daylight, the dawn of Friday, July 20, the day of my first action; my watch pointed—I think—to 2.40. I seized my arms, dipped my head into the basin, and rushed downstairs without drying myself. In less than a minute our company was drawn up outside; another company of our battalion was collecting in the same street. All was life and bustle: from every side came the sound of bugles, of words of command, of the tramp of detachments and the clatter of horses' hoofs. Sergeant-majors were running about, looking immensely important and getting into everybody's way. Our adjutant rode up and spoke to the captain. "Call the names!" commanded the latter. Three men of Jack's squad did not answer—the sentries at the extremity of the orchard, whom the guard had omitted

to relieve. These were called, and the company was complete. Tereb and his squad were sent for the colours, which were at the major's quarters; they returned with that officer. Soon the other companies arrived, and when the battalion was complete we marched out, eastward.

Outside the town we halted, on the Bulgareni road, close to the bridge which crosses the Grivitza. Other troops arrived from the town: two battalions, a body of Circassians, a squadron of regulars. Two battalions were formed into three parallel columns, the four companies of my battalion forming the middle column, with four companies of the other on each flank; my company was in the van, on a bridle-path leading in a north-easterly direction towards a ridge of hills of which the summit seemed to be about two miles distant. Ahead I perceived several small detachments of our irregular cavalry.

We were so busy that I had no time to think of the coming struggle and its possibilities. Jack looked bright and happy; the fire of enthusiasm shone in his eyes. I managed to squeeze his hand; he said, "Good luck, old fellow!"

It was ten or fifteen minutes past three when the order to advance was given. We marched on, with drums beating and colours flying; but soon the drums were stopped. It was a glorious morning: bright sunshine, fresh breeze, dark blue sky. To our right and left the other columns moved through the fields; we kept a little ahead, owing to our having the better track. It was gently rising ground. Looking round, I saw a battalion move away to our left in a northerly direction: it was soon lost to sight. In the west, the south-west, and the south I perceived, at a distance

varying from one to three miles, strong stationary bodies of our infantry and artillery. We seemed to be fully prepared for the attack.

The hills here are bare, and being on high ground I had a good view of the country. There was no enemy within my range of sight.

We had left our baggage in the house. We had our bread-bags, our flasks, our spades (four to the company). The captain had told me to leave a man behind, as a guard over the haversacks and great-coats against marauders. Naturally I had chosen one in whose courage I had no confidence, and who was footsore besides; but the captain had submitted a reliable man, also footsore, saying that the other would undoubtedly desert if left alone, but if he remained with us we had a chance of getting rid of him. He was among the victims. Our packhorses remained in Plevna.

Soon the men, who had been quiet, regained their spirits. The march was exhilarating. Last year's veterans boasted of their deeds and gave wholesome advice to the young recruits. Biscuits were eaten, flasks went to the lips, jokes were cracked and stories told.

Presently the path entered a hollow, and we lost sight of the columns on our flanks. We found a body of Circassians waiting, who preceded us a distance of 200 yards, having, in their turn, a vanguard of six men.

Throughout the day everything within the range of my experience worked as smoothly as well-greased machinery; but I was told afterwards there had been considerable disorder on our right wing, in the south, where the Russians were for a long time victorious; of this, however, I have no personal knowledge.

Turning round, I saw the other companies of our

battalion following, two in a body, one as reserve farther away. The major was with the main body, the adjutant with us, to the captain's ill-concealed annoyance. Later in the day this man, a fussy, fidgety, busybody, was wounded, at which occurrence the captain rejoiced greatly.

At four we reached a spot where the path crosses a ravine or hollow. The Circassians halted. I perceived that we had passed beyond the summit of the ridge, which was fifty feet above the level of path and ravine. The latter looked like the bed of a stream, but it contained no water. Both banks were overgrown with shrubs ; on our side there were some trees.

The captain told us that we had arrived at our destination. The Circassians dismounted and disposed themselves across the entrance of the path, sending their horses to the rear. Six men rode forward, beyond the ravine, on the continuation of the path. The spade-carriers erected some rough earthworks. Jack's squad and mine were to be stationed to the left, the first-lieutenant's to the right, of the path, all on the ridge. Climbing to our stations was not an easy matter. "Extend left—double file—6 arshins * between men, 10 arshins between files—sight rifles 500 metres," was the first battle-order I received in my life, and "Left turn—extend left—at the double—march!" was the first I gave.

The men were drawn out in a long line, and were told to lie down and avail themselves of every advantage offered by trees, shrubs, stones. Ten minutes later the advance-company of our left column arrived, and I,

* The old Arshin (yard = 29½ inches), also called hatvé, *i.e.* pace, was legally abolished in 1871 in favour of the French metrical system, but continued in practical use for twenty years afterwards. The modern Arshin, a draper's measure, is = 26·8 inches.

having the outside station, was instructed to keep in touch with it. I disposed my men accordingly.

On our side the ridge was steep ; the opposite bank sloped more gently, and was ten to fifteen feet lower. We overlooked rising ground ; but the view was limited.

In this situation we waited for an anxious hour. The men ate and drank, but talking was prohibited. The colonel and the major came up, on foot, and inspected our position. When they returned to the main body they took the colour squad with them.

How peaceful were our surroundings, as we lay or sat there waiting for the enemy ! The sun shone through the branches and drew a fantastic pattern on the mossy, fragrant ground ; daisies and buttercups reminded me of home ; the nightingales, which in the East are gregarious, sang plaintively in the boughs overhead ; the wind whispered in the leaves in a dreamy manner.

It must have been five when a man of the Circassian advance-guard came back at a trot. Immediately afterwards the report of a gun brought the nightingales' lament to a dead stop, startled the field-mice, which I had been watching lazily and drowsily, so that they scampered back to their holes, roused those men who had been dozing, and acted generally like a magician's wand, transforming a perfect idyll into the barbaric glamour of war.

This was a Russian gun. In less than a minute our batteries responded, first to our right, then also to the left. In the beginning the firing was slow. During the intervals of silence I heard more distant detonations, to the north-west, the east, and the south. Soon the reports waxed fast and furious ; there was hardly

any break in the roar, and so accustomed did my sense of hearing grow to this continuous thunder that I paid no heed to it, as if it were as much part and parcel of Nature as the smiling sky above me. The range of the Russian shells approached considerably; we heard them whizzing overhead, but were not struck. I heard afterwards that the main body of my battalion had been hit twice, and had to change position.

The abrupt termination of the reports quite startled us. Almost at the same moment the Circassian advance-guard came galloping back; the subdued command, "Ready for firing," was given, and passed on from man to man, like a persistent echo, till it was lost to my hearing. My heart throbbed violently; more so, perhaps, than if I had seen the enemy, for as yet I perceived nothing. I obtained a glimpse of Jack as he was giving some whispered order. Absolute silence had been enjoined. How handsome he looked in his boyish eagerness for the fray!

"There they are!" said one of my men, softly; and, to be sure, in a clearing, 200 yards away, I saw men in dark, sober uniforms glide stealthily from shelter to shelter. They were the Russian skirmishers.

I put my glasses to my eyes. The opposite ridge was suddenly swarming with men, some hundreds of them. I do not know whence they came—they seemed to grow out of the soil.

Then, all at once, dark, dense masses appeared on the summit of the ridge—closed bodies of infantry, two battalions, I should think, coming forward swiftly, noiselessly, like an inevitable, irresistible doom. I put the glasses away and clutched my sword—useless weapon!—firmly.

I cannot say what space of time had elapsed

between the return of the Circassians and the commencement of the firing. It seemed to me an eternity; it can have been but a few minutes. The suspense and strain upon the nerves whilst waiting for our bugle to sound "Fire" were terrible.

Suddenly a fellow with a villainous, bearded face, crowned by an ugly cap, appeared on the opposite bank, barely 150 feet away. I cocked my revolver. Other men appeared; soon I could have counted a hundred from where I stood. As yet no shot had been fired. At last our bugle sounded; the long-drawn-out clatter of rifle-fire woke the slumbering echoes of the glen; I was in a thick white cloud. Something whizzed past me, like a big blue-bottle on the wing, and the current of air caused by its rapid passage touched my ear. Another—another. All at once I realised that these were the enemy's bullets, and, *horribile dictu*, the discovery brought on a sudden violent attack of cholera-like indisposition.

It did not take me many seconds to recover, and soon I was cool and collected. Meanwhile the fire on both sides continued with great vehemence. One man close to me, kneeling, fell upon his face and never stirred; another had part of his ear carried away. When the smoke cleared I perceived three Russians lying at the botton of the ravine, one bleeding horribly in the face, the others in ghastly convulsions. I saw dense masses of men in serried ranks appear on the opposite bank.

I went up and down my line, exhorting, praising, shouting—uttering precious, ungrammatical nonsense, and acting like a maniac—of that I have no manner of doubt. A brief glimpse of Jack showed him doing much the same thing, with some little more method,

perhaps, and with considerable force of conviction. Several times I detected myself spouting German and English.

The men of my squad loaded and discharged with astonishing celerity; they had been thoroughly drilled at quick firing, in which the Turkish infantry excels. Some were shouting and jabbering like idiots, firing all the time; many seemed possessed of a perfectly devilish fury; others were silent, and more unconcerned than when at target-practice. Sergeant Bakal, the best shot of the battalion, aimed with great deliberation, and I doubt not but that he brought his man down with every discharge. The corporal swore like a trooper at the "Infidel dogs"; afterwards he told me, by way of apology, that this was the only way to animate the Turkish soldier.

In front of my squad the enemy did not advance beyond the edge of the opposite bank.

I presume that not many minutes had elapsed since the commencement of the fray when the captain came up hurriedly, and shouted into my ear—the din was perfectly infernal, and the thunder of cannon had recommenced—that he would have to give the order for retreat upon the main body; that I was not to trouble about regaining the path, but was to bring my squad back, independently of the others, through the shrubbery. He left me, and a minute afterwards the bugle sounded the retreat; those of the other advance-companies responded.

I collected my fifty men, minus one killed; two were *hors de combat*, and had to be carried; there were four or five with slight wounds.

Just then I noticed half a dozen Russians in the hollow below, trying to climb our bank. I shouted

to the sergeant and his party, and fired my revolver; one Russian dropped; the sergeant and his men discharged their rifles, and the rest were sprawling on the ground.

Jack's squad had already left when we broke up. The sergeant with twelve men covered our retreat, firing continually, at haphazard: for we were not pressed, owing, probably, to the difficulty which the enemy encountered in climbing the bank. The last thing I saw of the Russians was that they were coming down the opposite bank in dense numbers. In another minute we should have been annihilated.

I got my squad safely back to the main body of the battalion, which was ready in battle array, in an excellent position. We were sent to the rear, where the wounded received first-aid from the battalion's surgeon, assisted by an old corporal and a volunteer private who had been a student of medicine.

Jack's squad had arrived before mine; he had one killed and no dangerous wounds. The first-lieutenant's squad came up a few minutes later, and I learnt that his position, where the banks were less steep, had been assailed by superior numbers, and that he had had a hand-to-hand conflict. He had two killed and three severely wounded (left behind, but recovered later), besides minor accidents. I heard also that the lines of the other advance-companies had been broken through. The Circassians were the last to arrive, on foot, as the men in charge of the horses had retired in another direction. They had defended the bridle-path obstinately, and maintained a continuous fire during their retreat.

The fact that these men did not recover their horses until days afterwards will give the lay reader some

idea of the confusion in a widely extended camp after a general engagement.

The fire had relaxed, but about 6.30, as nearly as I can judge, a furious and sustained musketry-fire roused us, and we arrayed ourselves again for combat. We were now on the southern slope of the Janik Bair; the crest and the northern slope were occupied by the six fighting companies of our column. Three companies were in reserve; the three original advance-companies were for the present inactive in the rear. I saw the colonel and the two majors with their staffs on the top of the hill, with the reserve companies ready for the fray. Looking round I perceived a battery trotting away from us. On a hill to the east I noticed strong bodies of infantry in conflict. From all sides came the sounds of battle, violent enough to shake the ground; the engagement seemed to be general along the line.

Great was my astonishment when the order arrived to retreat to Bukova, which was pointed out to me on the northern edge of a hollow, about a mile distant. True, the Russian shells had recommenced to fall, but as yet no damage had been done, and we were in a capital position. I know that the command did not proceed from the Mushir, who watched the battle from the hill immediately east of Plevna. I have, therefore, this hypothesis to offer—

The brigadier, believing that we were outnumbered, considered it safer to retire early in good order than late as a beaten and demoralised mass. He chose Bukova on account of its proximity, and because it was held—as I learnt afterwards—by two battalions which had not yet been engaged. I have since ascertained that on and near this spot a Russian regiment

(Wologda, three battalions) was opposed to five Turkish battalions (our two, and three on our right flank). Taking into account the difference of strength between Russian and Turkish battalions, we were nearly equal. Another regiment (Galitz) was known to be coming up by the Nikopoli road; it arrived, however, too late.

Our reserve companies disappeared on the other side of the hill, probably to cover our retreat; I saw also a squadron of regular cavalry trotting forward. My company was at the head of the retiring column; in fact, I was the head man, with Sergeant Bakal, who always knew everything, to show me the way. We had charge of five one-horse carts filled with wounded; but these quitted us soon, and turned to the left, towards Plevna. We walked at a smart pace. All the time the firing continued behind us; evidently the tail of the column was being pressed hard by the advancing enemy. The shells fell to our right and left, but we were not struck.

Time calculations tell me that it was 7 or 7.30 when we reached Bukova. My memory is at fault as regards the events during the next stage of the battle; probably some sort of mental reaction set in. All I remember is that I found myself posted with my company on the bank of a brook (a tributary of the Grivitza), on the outskirts of the village, close to a mosque; that I felt terribly hungry, and that biscuits, of which I had some left, did not seem to satisfy me; that we were proceeding to refill our flasks in the streamlet, when a small Russian detachment appeared suddenly on the other side. A violent fire ensued, which cost us several men. In the midst of it there came from the interior of the village sounds of a most desperate encounter: furious firing, drums, bugles, vigorous

cries. Our adjutant came up at a gallop and shouted to the captain. The enemy on the opposite bank disappeared as suddenly as he had come, leaving several dead behind. The words, "The Russians are flying!" went from mouth to mouth, and off we ran, not in very good order. When we gained the spot where the Chalisovat bridle-path enters the village we perceived dense masses of Russians retreating in disorder, partly on this path, northward, partly across the fields to the east. Through my glasses I saw men without caps, men without rifles, men in shirt-sleeves, men running, firing behind them, dropping—a struggling mass of demoralised humanity. The Russian books state that the troops retired in good order. *I* can testify to the fact that they were in a desperate hurry, to say the least of it. Closed ranks of our infantry, under perfect control, were at their heels. We joined these, and found ourselves next to a company of our own battalion, with whom we advanced through the fields eastward. Thus we pursued the enemy across fields and meadows, over hedges and ditches, up hill and down dale. The men's spirits had revived wonderfully, for the joy of victory is as contagious as the despondency of defeat. I remember that the captain shouted to us lieutenants to get in front of the squads, to prevent the men from firing; their eagerness was alarming, and as we were in the second line our fire would have reached our comrades.

The Russians made a brief stand when they gained the Nikopoli road. Their officers succeeded in restoring something like order in the ranks. They were hailed with quick-fire, and their resistance did not last long. Soon they continued the retreat, in slightly better order, leaving scores of dead behind.

Our captain now stopped his all too eager men. Other companies continued the pursuit, but not for long. Soon three companies of our battalion collected on this spot; the fourth did not rejoin us until hours later, in Plevna, having followed a hostile detachment on the Chalisovat path, where they encountered a regiment of Cossacks. As the major and the adjutant could not be found (the former was with the fourth company, the latter had been wounded), my captain took command of the battalion and led it to the bridle-path—free from enemies, but containing a good many dead, friend and foe—and back to the ravine, where we occupied the positions which we had held in the morning. I saw no Russians again that day, nor, indeed, until ten days later. The cannonade soon ceased and the rifle-fire grew faint and fainter. The first battle of Plevna had been fought and won.

I should have liked to be able to record that I had a hand in the rout of the enemy; but truth compels me to state that I had no share in it beyond that mentioned above. What had actually happened was this—

Our column, closely pursued, had entered Bukova, followed thither by the Russians. There had been a desperate street fight, and the enemy seemed to have had the best of it. Some of his companies, considering themselves masters of the place, had actually bivouacked in the streets, when they were surprised by fresh battalions. After a brief but furious encounter the Russians had been driven out of the village, in the condition in which I had perceived them.

The general course of the battle was, briefly, as follows:—

The enemy, commanded by General Schilder-Schuldner, attacked from four points: from the north, north-east, east, and south-east.

In the north a regiment of Cossacks became engaged with the two battalions stationed near Opanetz, and were driven off, so that one battalion was available to assist the troops in Bukova.

In the north-east two regiments and three batteries attacked the main body of our left wing (nine battalions). Four battalions, supported by the unengaged centre, held their positions; five battalions (including mine) were thrown into Bukova. Here were two battalions (fresh); one came from Opanetz, and one was sent from the reserve; these made a counter-attack and routed the enemy.

In the east one regiment and two batteries pressed our right wing back (westward), along and south of the Bulgareni road, as far as the headquarters hill. The Turks became demoralised, from various causes: they were over-tired, not having properly rested after their march; the commander of this wing (Ahmed Hifzi Pasha) and his successor (Lieut.-Colonel Husni Bey) were wounded; a bugler had sounded the retreat through a mistake. The Mushir reorganised the beaten infantry, and, utilising his two reserve battalions, made a counter-attack, which succeeded.

In the south a Cossack brigade approached as far as Radishevo and made a demonstration, then turned eastward, and finally covered the retiring forces.

At midday the four Russian columns were in full retreat. They bivouacked that night near Breslianitza.

The enemy lost over 3000 killed and wounded, nearly a third of the troops under fire, and a fourth of the

force engaged. This terrible loss fell almost entirely upon three infantry regiments, the artillery and Cossacks having suffered but little. I, personally, saw no hostile cavalry on that day. We had 2000 killed and *hors de combat*. Our trophies were seventeen three-horse ammunition carts, one demolished gun, a great many rifles, and the baggage—including 300 tents—of an entire regiment, found on the spot on which it had bivouacked before commencing the attack.

It must have been 1 p.m. when we arrived at our old positions near the ravine. There were thirty corpses in the latter, some in grotesque attitudes. We stayed on the scene for two hours, with outposts on the opposite bank, but no enemy was seen. The want of water made itself felt, more so than the craving for food. Our flasks were empty, and there was no water in our proximity. The captain had gone to arrange the positions of the other companies. Jack came up to me, and addressed me in English.

"I say, old chap, my men are famishing; the boss"—he meant the captain—"isn't there, and Mehemed is a quarter of a mile away, so we are in supreme command; suppose we organise a water-search?"

We consulted Sergeant Bakal—as always—who agreed to our proposal. In addition to his other accomplishments, he had the reputation, gained during the Servian campaign, of being the most successful water-finder of the corps. So he went with three men to explore the shrubbery.

The sergeant returned after a brief absence, reporting the discovery of a fine spring. A water-party was organised, and the find was reported to the first lieutenant, who held the path and the ridge beyond.

How we enjoyed the precious liquid! The costliest vintage could not have tasted sweeter.

When the refreshing effect of the water had worn off, the total exhaustion of the men became apparent. Small wonder, considering that they had fought after a seven days' forced march with barely six hours of rest intervening, and had eaten nothing but a few biscuits in eighteen hours. Many were footsore and could hardly limp. The fatigue, heat, and hunger were enough to kill a man. We lieutenants and the non-commissioned officers did our best to restore their equanimity. The last march—that to the present spot—was ridiculed; we had met no Russians, except dead ones, and they could do no harm; why could we not have gone back to Plevna and had a distribution and a good meal?—for it had become known that a convoy had arrived late last night.

To our joy we were relieved at three by a battalion coming up from the hills to our right. We were instructed to return to Plevna and distribute the train which we had escorted among the different battalions. However, this order was countermanded afterwards, on account of the men's extreme fatigue, and was not executed until the following day.

Whilst we were forming for the march back I observed the bringing up of the dead for burial, this battalion having been instructed to commence immediately the ghastly task of interment, necessarily a pressing duty by reason of the heat. The faces of some bore an expression of peace and contentment; but in many cases the features were distorted. Several bodies were mutilated horribly by shells. I was struck by the extraordinary postures of some of the corpses. One had his fists doubled in front of him,

like a boxer ready to spar; another was sucking his fingers; but enough of these horrors, which repeated themselves after every engagement.

I was astonished to discover how hardened a few hours of slaughter had rendered me. Jack had the same sensation. But the horror of the situation came home to me later when muster was held, and I had to cross out several names, those of men who had responded, vigorous and strong, in the morning. After the next action this feeling also had vanished.

As near as I can remember, our company, out of a total of 180, had lost seven killed and ten *hors de combat;* there were, besides, ten or fifteen with minor wounds, contusions, and scratches.

During our march to town we met many cartloads of dead; the poor fellows were piled one upon the other like so much human rubbish. Friend and foe slept in peaceful embrace.

Our troops buried 1000 Russians and 900 Turks. We had 300 wounded prisoners.

At four we arrived in Plevna, dead-beat, famishing, limping, dust-stained and smoke-begrimed, many in tatters, many bleeding—a sorry spectacle. We went to our old quarters. Several men had dropped on the road; these came in later on the carts bringing up the wounded.

A distribution took place immediately, and Sergeant Bakal obtained for my squad two fine joints of beef, a sufficiency of rice, turnips, biscuits, coffee, some pears and early apples, a little tobacco, and the necessary salt, sugar, soap and candles.

The town was all in a bustle. The ambulances were full. Carts of wounded came from all sides; their groans were terrible to hear.

So far as I know we had taken no unwounded prisoners, which speaks well for the bravery of the enemy.

Both Jack and I thought it a pity that the Russians were not followed farther, particularly by cavalry; for it turned out that on all points the pursuit extended only to the lines originally occupied. However, I cannot presume to criticise, and such a commander as Osman must be held to have known his business.

Moreover, we were short of cavalry, having at that time only six squadrons of regulars (of eighty men each), 400 Circassians, and a troop of fifty men composed of the armed and mounted Turkish peasantry of the province. The Circassians, though undoubtedly brave and extremely cunning, were given to excesses: were selfish, vicious, riotous, ill-disciplined, and altogether unreliable soldiers, as I found out later, to my cost. The one occasion on which I was in disgrace with my superiors was due to them; the incident will be narrated in its proper place.

We had no further duties that day. After a few hours' rest we lighted a bonfire in the orchard, and the men sang, talked, and disported themselves at their sweet will and pleasure, being in the highest of spirits, although many slept through the performance. A scratch band marched through the streets, discoursing barbarous music, with much beating of drums, clashing of cymbals, and jingling of bells. These latter are carried, to the number of fifteen or twenty, on a gaily decorated pole with a half-moon on the top. No thoughts were, apparently, given to the comrades who rested by this time under the soil, or to those who, in the ambulances, writhed in cruel agonies. I played

chess with Mehemed, sparred with Jack, fenced with Ibrahim, made an entry in my diary, and wrote a note home, without any immediate prospect of despatching it; for our field-post arrangements were of a primitive description, and broke down completely more than once.

Before retiring Jack and I went up to the flat roof, whence we saw the bivouac-fires extending in a semicircle, north, *viâ* east, to south, with a diameter of five to six miles, making a lurid smear in the sky.

The night passed quietly, and I enjoyed perfect rest.

CHAPTER VI

PREPARING FOR THE DECISIVE STRUGGLE

July 21 *to* 29, 1877

Next morning (July 21) my squad escorted the pack-horses and carts of three battalions (fifty-four horses and six carts) to one of the camps on the eastern hills. Here the men were busy erecting provisional earth-works, and in the absence of a sufficient number of tools many were digging with their bayonets.

Yesterday's events formed the one topic of conversation in camp. It appeared that all our battalions had been in turn engaged, even the three which had formed the tail of our column and had arrived during the night. The panic on our right wing was much discussed. The general commanding here (Ahmed Hifzi Pasha) had been wounded, and the buglers had sounded the retreat, an order which could be traced to no source, and gave rise to absurd rumours. I was told the Mushir had sent a message that, if the troops did not make an immediate stand, he would have them shelled by their own guns—those of two batteries established on the top of the hill, close to his head-quarters. This had the desired effect.

Later I learnt that the Mushir had caused two

officers from this wing to be brought before him, on a charge of cowardice. Instead of having them court-martialed he inflicted a personal chastisement—boxed their ears, in fact. I believe that these men behaved well afterwards. This was said to be the only occasion on which Osman had been known to lose his temper.

In the bivouacs the men were building huts and making things comfortable.

I was instructed to take back to Plevna, and deliver intact to a colonel, the baggage of a Russian regiment found early in the morning. During the journey I had some difficulty to prevent plunder on the part of my men.

At midday Jack and I were ordered to present ourselves, at the Konak of the Kaim-makam of Plevna, to the officer whom I have previously called Ali Bey. This gentleman asked us whether we were capable of assisting in the preparation of the plans for fortifying the camp, *i.e.* reproducing drawings and sketches, and so forth. We replied in the affirmative, and received from him a note to our major, requesting the latter to grant us three days' dispensation from duties.

After dinner—for which we had again meat and a quantity of fruit from the numerous orchards in the vicinity—we reported ourselves to Ali Bey, and commenced our task, which was easy enough, and consisted principally in making "clean" copies of plans. Our office was a lofty room in the Konak, in the centre of the town. Two young lieutenants, one battalion clerk, two company clerks, and an ancient kol aghassi were our colleagues. The lieutenants belonged to the one company of engineers of which our corps could then boast. The kol aghassi acted as superintendent or chef-de-bureau; he was gruff whilst at work, but

thawed at meal-times, and ate alarmingly. Some difficulty was caused by the scarcity of stationery and drawing implements : we had but one pair of compasses and half a ruler among us, and no indiarubber. This being made known to Ali Bey, he instituted a house-to-house search—the shops were closed—and his emissaries brought back rulers and pencils galore, reams of paper, quarts of ink, but no compasses. One man, through misunderstanding or ignorance, or possibly by way of a joke, came with a woman's workbasket ; so the scissors did duty as compasses.

There being a scarcity of material for artificial light, we left off work before dusk, and had a good supper in an arbour in the garden.

Jack and I returned to our quarters, but found the company gone. Our luggage was left behind, with a note from the captain, which we had some trouble to decipher—in fact, we had to call in aid—instructing us to join him in the bivouac on the Janik Bair after having finished with Ali Bey. So we had the house to ourselves. We carried two bedsteads into one of the ground-floor rooms, and made up comfortable quarters. Then we strolled through the town.

The terrifying effect of the battle having worn off, many of the Turkish inhabitants were taking an airing outside their houses, the women veiled, leaving only the eyes visible ; but these were expressive enough to atone for the absence of the face. Numbers of the Christians had fled ; those remaining behind did not leave their abodes. No Bulgarian inhabitant was allowed to pass beyond the Turkish lines, lest he turn traitor.

Trade in Plevna was at a standstill. Nobody was busy except the ambulance parties, and these were

overworked. Not many soldiers appeared in the streets ; I believe in those days the town itself was held by a single battalion. No damage had been done by shells.

Some symptoms of relief from fear, anxiety, and suspense made themselves felt after Osman's first victory. The Turkish authorities had been formally reinstalled after the Cossacks had been driven away by Atouf Pasha on July 9, ten days before the arrival of our corps, but it was only when the first battle of Plevna had been fought and won that they really resumed their functions. The Christians must have spent a terrible time, with their suppressed sympathy for the invaders. I believe the two churches of Plevna saw no worshippers for many months. Later the buildings were, I think, utilised by the soldiers.

During our walk we met one of the " fellows from our office," as Jack called him ; he returned home with us. Here he offered us a flask of capital brandy. I do not know where the rogue had obtained it. By the light of a candle-stump we spent a jovial evening. The Turk did not partake of the spirits, his religion forbidding it, so Jack made some coffee for him, which we had saved from the morning's ration. I contributed the remainder of my Widdin cigarettes. When midnight arrived the Turk did not venture to return to his quarters, as the streets were patrolled, and he had exceeded his leave of absence. He slept in an upper room. I do not know what excuse he made in the morning.

I can pass over the next two days (July 22 and 23) with few words. We were busy in the " office," and finished our task on the afternoon of the 23rd. Having been dismissed by Ali Bey with gracious words, we

shouldered our baggage and walked to the Grivitza bridge, thence up the hills, where we lost our bearings, "accidentally on purpose," so Jack said. It was not until some hours afterwards that we found the bivouac of our battalion. We presented ourselves to the major, who employed us immediately in surveying the ground. This work was quite new to us, but necessity is an ideal teacher.

This done, we reported ourselves to the captain and resumed command of our squads. The poor man had been much worried with the trenches allotted to his company; but we assisted him to the best of our abilities.

The erection of redoubts and entrenchments was already in full swing. There were now plenty of tools in stock, a supply having come from Orkanyé. The troops worked in relays, by night and day, in the hours of darkness by the light of fires. I had four hours' duty that evening, and slept in the big hostelry of the starlit sky. The next day my men constructed some rough huts; we were thus protected against the showers that fell at rare intervals. Later, the interior of the hollowed-out redoubts served as sleeping-quarters.

The 24th passed without incident.

I think it was on this day that we received a strong reinforcement (fourteen battalions) from Sofia, and that we heard that Mehemed Ali Pasha (alias Karl Detroit of Magdeburg) had replaced Abdul Kerim Pasha as Serdar Ekrem.

On the 25th I had an accident. An order had arrived from headquarters enjoining the utmost speed in the construction of the works. Seeing other lieutenants take part in the digging, I seized a spade and worked till the perspiration streamed across my face.

My foot slipped, I fell, and my left hand slid down the stem, the upper edge of the blade cutting the thumb at the base, where it is joined to the forefinger.

The wound bled and smarted considerably. The battalion surgeon happened to be near. After having bound up the hand, he advised me to go to an ambulance, as there was a danger of something or other setting in—I did not understand the word he employed. Having heard of lockjaw, and knowing that ills are expressed in Turkish by "agrissi" (for instance, bash agrissi, headache; itch agrissi, dysentery), I asked: "Chéné agrissi," *i.e.* jaw-ache? He replied, "Evvet, lakin pek chok daha fena" (yes, but very much worse), and spoke to the captain. The latter ordered me to depart immediately, saying that he would not like me to be absent from the engagement which was sure to take place within the next few days. I did not much relish the idea of the two-mile tramp to town in the scorching sun; but Bakal informed me that carts were going to Plevna with empties, and bespoke a seat on one for me. There were a dozen, drawn by oxen, with civilians as drivers, under a corporal, with two men and a few irregulars.

I went with a note from the surgeon to a volunteer ambulance hailing, I think, from Philippopolis. It was established in the ground-floor and outhouses of a public building—a school, I believe—the upper floor of which served as offices to various civil and military bodies. The staff consisted of a physician, two surgeons, an apothecary, a clerk, a cook, and a dozen attendants, bearers, drivers, and servants. At that time it had charge of thirty invalids, mostly wounded, some few suffering from dysentery. Two of the patients were Russians. There was accommodation for

another thirty inmates in the spacious rooms. On the evening of the battle there had been fifty, but all that could be moved had been despatched in carts to Orkanyé, to be forwarded thence to Sofia and farther. The remaining cases were grave ones.

I was given chicken-broth, eggs, milk. Altogether, I received exceedingly handsome treatment; for we were then in the realm of plenty: every day brought convoys from Orkanyé.

Not feeling in the least unwell, I volunteered to assist the clerk. He gave me something to copy. After that I wrote letters for the Russians, in French, with which language one of them was conversant. This man had both arms amputated at the elbow, but I believe at the time did not know it, as he complained of pain in the hands. The case, as related to me by the clerk, is a good sample of battle-field complications: the man had received a shot in the left wrist; whilst on the ground, insensible, with his right arm outstretched, the eight guns of a Russian battery, retreating hastily, drove over him, completely mangling the sound arm, besides inflicting other injuries. The second Russian had the flesh of his buttocks carried away by a shell-splinter, and had to lie in bed on his face. I wrote for this poor fellow to his wife, in his comrade's (a student of law from Dorpat) French, for, of course, I knew nothing of the Russian language.

A fortnight later I had an opportunity of despatching this letter. A few days after that I happened to be in Plevna, and called at the ambulance, in order to inform the Russian that I had fulfilled my pledge. He had died the night before. "The operation was a complete success," said the doctor, "but he succumbed to exhaustion." I believe his comrade recovered.

As I was an inmate of ambulances on five occasions, there is some confusion in my memory as regards the duration of each sojourn. Lockjaw did not set in, and I think it was no later than the following morning that I was told the danger had passed and I could go.

The battalion surgeon, seeing me return hale and hearty, angry that his wisdom had been given the lie, said gruffly: "According to the canons of the science you ought to have had lockjaw. They cannot have treated you correctly." Jack executed a jig, in the fulness of his heart, much to the surprise of the soldiers, who had never before seen or heard of a dancing gentleman.

I had brought with me from Plevna 500 cigarettes and a pound of tobacco, obtained in a manner that I am now ashamed of. We had a jollification. Mehemed gave me a rook, and checkmated me in twelve moves. The captain partook of my cigarettes, winked his ugly little eyes, and said nothing. The fire flared up brightly —there is nothing more annoying in bivouac life than to be unable to get the fire to burn—the stars smiled at us, the wind fanned us; in front stretched the peaceful solitude under the veil of night, and before us lay Time, with death, and horrors immeasurably worse than death, hidden in her womb. The angels must have wept at our thoughtlessness.

I must mention two successful actions, fought on July 25 and 26, in which I had no share.

On the 25th, four of our battalions and two guns, under Brigadier Hassan Sabri Pasha, with Lieut.-Colonel Mehemed Nazif Bey as second, attacked Türstenik, north-west of Plevna. Here the Cossacks had established their base of operations, whence they harassed our convoys. After a brief resistance the

enemy was dispersed. The force returned to Plevna on the following day.

Late on the 25th the Mushir despatched six battalions, a battery, and a body of Circassians, under Brigadier Rifa'at Pasha, with Colonel Tewfik Bey as second, on the road to Lovdcha. This town, called Lovatz by the Bulgarians, on the Osma, had been occupied by Cossacks on July 16. It lies eighteen miles north of Troyan and thirty-one miles north of the Troyan Pass entrance, on the spot where the Plevna-Troyan road is crossed by that coming from Tirnova, *viâ* Selvi, in the east. It had a mixed population of 14,000 souls, and was considered one of the richest, prettiest, best built, and most advanced towns of Bulgaria.

I have already mentioned that we had received fourteen fresh battalions from Sofia. This brought our total up to thirty-nine. Deducting the six despatched to Lovdcha, which stayed there, we had a strength of thirty-three in the battle of July 30.

In the early dawn of the 26th the Turks attacked Lovdcha. The Cossacks retreated almost immediately; the Bulgarian inhabitants, whom the Russians had armed and organised, fought furiously, but vainly. Summary justice was dispensed among them. I heard that some hundreds were strung up.

It was undoubtedly Osman's intention to establish a base for future offensive operations on the Lovdcha-Plevna line. Probably he counted on Lovdcha being garrisoned by another corps, or at least a division. Such a one could have been sent from Sofia, Philippopolis, or Adrianople, *viâ* the Etropol or Troyan passes, these routes being in Turkish hands. Nothing of the sort was done. The burden of the war was laid

upon Osman's shoulders. In solitary grandeur he accomplished the seemingly impossible: with his single corps he held for four and a half months the largest empire of the world in check.

The three days, 27th to 29th, passed in a fever-heat of preparation for the decisive struggle. We had plenty to eat—meat daily, and more fruit than was good for us: there were several cases of dysentery, two in our company; one or two terminated fatally. I was in good health; the wound had healed before the day of the second battle. Jack was in splendid condition; with his good humour and high spirits he was the life and soul of the camp.

Our cavalry, increased by two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks hailing, I think, from the Caucasus—dirty, disreputable fellows, but as brave as lions and as cunning as serpents—patrolled the neighbourhood continually. From all accounts it appeared that strong forces were concentrating and approaching from the north (Nikopoli), the north-east (Sistova), the south-east (Tirnova). It was clear that this time we had not to deal with a single division, but with several corps.

One half-squad of our company (twenty to twenty-five men) was constantly away on outpost duty. As both Jack and I were evincing some skill in the construction and completion of the redoubt, the captain kept our squads and us in camp, the duty of providing the outpost devolving on the first squad. This squad, with the addition of a few Circassians, was, for outpost purposes, divided into two parts, and was commanded by Hardar, and Tereb alternately. Each outpost established a chain of a dozen single sentries, arranged in a semicircle: sometimes each sentry dug for

himself a hole three feet deep; but in most cases this practice was not adopted until a later date: in November we had a continuous chain of these, thirty miles long, around our position. I estimate the distance between redoubt and outpost at a third, between outpost and sentry at a fourth, of a mile. I believe that each company in the front line had to furnish permanently one outpost. Ours was visited frequently by the captain, whilst the major, the colonel, and even the brigadier, or some one on his behalf, made unannounced tours of inspection at all hours of the day and night. Nobody was allowed to enter the camp without establishing his identity; no person—except reconnoitring or foraging parties—was suffered to leave unless he or she produced an authority from the Mushir.

I once stopped a party of Bulgarians from Plevna who were trying to sneak out with all their goods and chattels, including a cat, a canary, and a baby, and sent them back to town under escort. I made my report as mild as possible, and I believe they were not interfered with, being merely told not to do it again.

Our adjutant was laid up with a bad wound, to everybody's satisfaction. He recovered a month later, and there was a day of lament.

The redoubt which my battalion occupied was one of those four called by the Russians "Grivitza redoubts." We named them "Janik Bair tabiyalar," from the hill which formed their base. The northern slope of the redoubt, facing the enemy, bordered upon the ravine which played such a conspicuous part in the first battle. It had one ditch or trench for the protection of skirmishers on the southern side of the ravine, and two,

one above the other, on the crest of the opposite bank. There were on each flank trenches running at obtuse angles to the redoubt, whence an attacking enemy could be taken by a flank fire. It was due to these side-trenches that the Russian attempts in the next action failed. The garrison consisted of two battalions, a battery of five guns (a gun of this battery had been wrecked on July 20), and a small body of Circassians for reconnoitring, outpost, and orderly duties.

A second redoubt, nearly in a line with ours, and adjoining it to our right, was occupied by two battalions and half a battery. On our left, a little in advance, half a mile from us, near Bukova, and facing north-west (whilst we faced due north), were two smaller redoubts, each containing a battalion and one or two guns.

These four redoubts, two large and two small, formed a solid stronghold, shaped naturally out of the Janik Bair, garrisoned by a brigade (six battalions, say 3500 men, with eleven guns). The length of the stronghold, east to west, was three and a half miles. It cut at right angles across the Nikopoli road.

The trenches were four feet deep. I estimate the height of the redoubts at twenty feet, exclusive of the natural elevation of the ground.

On our left flank we were exposed, but had an isolated, fortified advance-post two and a half miles to the north-west, near Opanetz, composed of two battalions, guarding the approaches to the Vid. Another similar post, three miles south of the former, composed of one battalion, held the Vid bridge.

Bukova (outside our position) was commanded by

the two smaller redoubts I have mentioned; I shall, therefore, call these the "Bukova redoubts."

On our right flank was a powerful fortification, facing east, and occupied by three battalions and two half-batteries, each of the latter in a square-shaped redoubt. These are the world-famed "Grivitza redoubts Nos. 1 and 2" of the Russians; we called them later Bash Tabiyalar (Head Batteries); henceforward I shall adopt this name in referring to them.

The fortifications above mentioned combined to form our left wing. It was under the command of Adil Pasha, who had at his disposal a division (twelve battalions), three batteries, two squadrons of regular cavalry, and a detachment of Circassians.

Our right wing, under Hassan Sabri Pasha, faced south. The strength of the two wings was identical.

Osman had thirty-three battalions fifty-seven guns, six squadrons of regulars, two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks, and 400 irregulars; total, 20,000 men. The Lovdcha garrison is not included. Deducting the forces on the two wings, a general reserve was left of nine battalions, three and a half batteries, and four squadrons. Of these battalions, one garrisoned Plevna. The batteries and the squadrons were established on the crest of the hill east of the town on which the Mushir had his headquarters. The remaining reserve of eight battalions bivouacked on the southern and eastern slopes of this hill. The twenty-two guns commanded two-thirds of the potential battle-field.

Having assisted in the preparation of the plans, my recollection of these arrangements is vivid.

The extreme dimensions of the Turkish position were, approximately: Vid bridge west to Bash Tabiyas

east, seven miles; Opanetz north to "Green Hills" south, six miles.*

Our redoubt was hollowed out and divided into chambers serving as sleeping-quarters and storehouses. In the construction we had to do almost without timber, as there are hardly any trees on the hills north and east of Plevna; those south and west are wooded, and contain many fine orchards and vineyards. The fruit-trees were left untouched, by order, probably because they furnished such good and abundant food.

The roof was formed by odd boards—pieces of demolished furniture—and propped up by tent-poles. The walls were strengthened by means of stones roughly hewn into shape. The floor was covered with the sun-dried skins of slaughtered beasts, thick layers of straw, sheepskins, and blankets to lie on. Every man or body of men who had to go into Plevna or any of the surrounding villages brought something back thence—some implement, tool, or domestic utensil. The Turks gave willingly, the Bulgarians from motives of fear. I am afraid many things were seized forcibly—"borrowed," as we used to call it. We had no money, but written acknowledgments were given; it is safe to assume that these were never exchanged for cash. Thus we increased our comfort from day to day. Sergeant Bakal, with his wonderful adroitness, his never-failing resources, his thousand-and-one accomplishments, was invaluable to my squad, and our quarters served as a model to many others. The disposal of sewage caused much anxious

* I have adopted the name "Green Hills" for the conglomeration of hills and hillocks south of Plevna, between the town and Krishin. I never heard the name Yeshil Bairlar. The appellation is an invention of the Russian writers, but it is appropriate and it has become historic.

consideration. Seymour and I exacted scrupulous cleanliness. We persuaded the first lieutenant to adopt our plans; soon other companies followed our example, and in the end our redoubt was the healthiest in camp.

We insisted on our men washing themselves and their clothes, scrubbing the boards, utensils, &c., as much as the supply of water—by no means unlimited—would allow. The scarcity of disinfectants was a serious drawback; but I managed to obtain from the apothecary of an ambulance some permanganate of potash, insect-powder, and carbolic acid. Soap we "borrowed" in Plevna; that given with the rations was insufficient, and the supply not regular. The same remark applies to candles. We had to husband our resources, and thus only one soap ablution per diem was allotted to each man. With the insect-powder I had to be as sparing as if it were diamond-dust. The spring which Bakal had discovered provided our drinking-water; the bulk of this priceless material had to be obtained daily from the Grivitza, a mile south, in casks piled on ox-carts. Arrangements were made for draining the redoubt and catching the rain-water in tubs.

Everything that could serve as shelter to an advancing enemy in front of our lines was destroyed. The shrubs thus obtained were employed as fuel, after having been dried in the sun.

Our redoubt was finished by July 29; but many others were not completed until after the battle, especially as regards the hollowing-out. In most cases the troops slept in mud huts or under canvas. I have seen a splendid mahogany wardrobe accommodating six men, shelved like passengers in a vessel.

A dining-room table was transformed into a bed-closet.

The general scheme of the fortifications which constituted the stronghold of Plevna was not completed until the end of August, while the west front was not fortified until October. Roughly speaking, we had on August 31 twice as many redoubts as on July 30.

In the afternoon of the 29th it became known that an engagement was imminent. The superior officers were summoned to headquarters, and before nightfall we had our detailed instructions. The major called us officers together and addressed us.

Our arrangements were complete before darkness set in. We had 500 cartridges to each man, eighty per man carried in the pouches, the rest stored in the redoubt. The bread-bags were filled with biscuits, the flasks with cold coffee. There was an abundance of food in our store-chambers. Tubs with drinking-water were placed in the trenches. Carts stood ready to send the wounded to the rear; the horses were harnessed and saddled, ready to remove the guns and spare ammunition in case the redoubt should be taken. Swords and bayonets were sharpened, rifles inspected and cleaned, and the surgeon tested his knives, probes, and saws.

The ferik (Adil Pasha) inspected us as we were drawn up in line, presenting arms. He expressed satisfaction at the condition of the redoubt, and lingered for a while over our domestic arrangements. The sanitary system which Jack and I had installed brought a smile of good-natured contempt to his handsome old face.

The bulk of the men went to sleep at ten, lying down fully dressed. The outposts were strengthened, and

there were continuous inspection and constant reconnoitring during the hours of darkness. The captain and the first-lieutenant were away on these duties all night, so the temporary command of the company devolved on me. Jack and I slept in turns of two hours.

During my watch I sat on a camp-stool on the parapet, scanning the horizon with my glasses, and straining every nerve to catch the slightest suspicious noise; but no sights or sounds betrayed the proximity of the enemy. Beside me artillerymen stood watch over their guns; in front, sentries paced the bank of the nearest trench. To the right and left officers were engaged in an occupation similar to mine—that is, doing nothing but watching and waiting.

During the first part of the night we had clear weather; towards morning it grew thick; a heavy white mist settled over the landscape. At two Jack released me, and I went below.

I had no evil forebodings and no fear of the morrow.*

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND BATTLE OF PLEVNA

July 30, 1877

At six on the morning of Monday, July 30, we stood ready in our positions, in an impenetrable white mist.

The battalion which, together with mine, formed the garrison of our redoubt was divided into eight companies, nominally of 100 men each, actually of eighty, each company being sub-divided into two squads, under lieutenants.

Our battalion having four companies, there were thus twelve companies for our redoubt and its dependencies, which I shall call A, B, C, D, and *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, *q*, *r*, *s*, *t*, respectively. These must be understood to be my own denominations, introduced for the sake of clearness and brevity. A to D represent the four larger companies (of my battalion), of 150 to 160 men each; *m* to *t*, the eight smaller companies, of eighty to eighty-five men each. My company is called C.

These twelve companies were distributed as follows: *m* in the first, *n* in the second trench (counting from the outside); *o* and *p* on the southern slope and bank of the ravine, where the thick shrubbery had been left

undisturbed ; *q* in the third trench—all those mentioned hitherto being extended in long lines of skirmishers ; *r* and *s* in the left (western), A in the right (eastern) side-trench ; B and C in the redoubt, D and *t*, as reserve, in rear of redoubt. Inside the redoubt were also the five guns, with their eighty or ninety artillerymen, the colonel and the two majors, with their staffs, and a dozen Circassians for orderly duty ; in rear, with the reserve, were the two squadrons of regulars belonging to our division, and a body of Circassians. The ferik and his staff were with us at the beginning of the battle ; afterwards they went to the redoubt on our right, where things did not go so smoothly as with us.

The instructions for retreat were as follows : *m* on *n* ; *m* and *n* on *o* and *p* ; *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, on *q* ; then, dividing, *m*, *n*, *o*, on *r* and *s* (left), *p* and *q* on A (right) ; then, both side-trenches to redoubt ; should the redoubt be taken, the whole body southward to the Bulgareni road ; lastly, to the hills immediately east of Plevna.

My company was in the redoubt, where we were protected from everything save shells. The three squads were posted to the right of the battery, in a single line. I had the middle station ; Jack to my left, adjoining the battery ; Mehemed, the outside station, on my right ; Ibrahim and the colour squad were behind me. The company mustered 155 officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, exclusive of non-combatants ; twelve men were in the ambulances.

The morning passed in a tedious manner. From 6 to 6.30 we waited, all on the alert, but nothing occurred. At 6.30 we heard the clatter of hoofs to our left, on the Nikopoli road, coming towards us ; a few minutes later permission was given to the men to

sit or lie down, with two look-outs from each squad on the parapet, some men to go below to assist the train soldiers in cooking breakfast. The captain added that the enemy would not arrive yet for hours.

The men sat or squatted on the ground. Jack and I mounted the parapet, and scanned the curling vapours with our glasses; but gazing at a blank soon becomes monotonous, so we got down, after having instructed the look-out men to be vigilant—a useless caution, when with the greatest exertion nothing could be seen, and the only sounds that reached us were those proceeding from our own troops in the trenches.

Not far from us was a group of officers (the various staffs), who sat or stood around a table improvised out of a crate, where they examined a map. Our captain dozed in a kitchen-chair (stolen Heaven knows where!); when Jack and I stepped down from the parapet, he opened his eyes and smiled, cunningly and maliciously: he knew our youthful zeal would soon cool amid such depressing surroundings. These damp vapours were enough to freeze an active volcano.

Breakfast—brought up to us, and consisting of boiled rice and bread baked overnight—revived our spirits wonderfully.

Mehemed actually proposed chess; he had "borrowed" the implements from our late quarters in town. In the friendly shelter of Sergeant Bakal's broad back he played his last game on this side of the grave. I hope the houris in his paradise are adepts. He beat me, but not quite so easily as on former occasions, over which circumstance he pondered a good deal. Permission to smoke was given, but talking was prohibited.

At eight a gun was fired on the Bash Tabiyas,

probably by way of sign or warning. Up jumped the captain, down went the chessmen into a convenient hole; the dozers awoke with a start, and tried to appear as if they had not slept; dozens of cigarettes flew over the parapet like a preliminary pyrotechnic display. There was a movement among the group of officers; aides-de-camp and orderlies ran to and fro, commands were given, men rode away at a gallop and were swallowed up by the mist. To judge by the sound a large body of horsemen trotted northward on the Nikopoli road; these returned *ventre a terre* twenty minutes later. An order was issued to the artillerymen; their officers trained the guns to the proper position. There was a commotion: some one was hailed by the sentries on the parapet; the captain and I climbed up, and perceived below the indistinct figure of a lieutenant. He shouted:—

"The captain in the first trench sends a message that the enemy has appeared in strong numbers in front of his position. Advanced posts report having heard noise sufficient to proceed from half a dozen battalions and several batteries; there seems to be no cavalry."

The captain reported this to the major. There was a brief consultation around the table.

Adil Pasha came to where I stood, and climbed up with the help of my hand, being no longer as young, slim, and agile as he undoubtedly used to be. This conversation took place:—

Adil: "Have you heard any firing?"

Mulazim: "None, sir, save the gun in the east."

Adil: "Whence do you come?"

Mulazim: "From the first trench, sir."

Adil: "Have your advanced posts come in?"

Mulazim: "They have, sir, as soon as they perceived the enemy to be in proximity; but the ordinary sentries are still in front of the line."

Adil: "Go back, sir, and tell your captain and that of the second trench not to incur losses over their ditches. They are to be evacuated as soon as deemed desirable. The ravine and the third trench, on the contrary, are to be held until resistance is no longer possible."

The mulazim disappeared in the fog; the Pasha climbed down, asked me: "Have you a light, sir?" (what a passion these Turks have for their cigarettes! I knew men who smoked a hundred a day), and joined his officers.*

The artillerymen re-trained their pieces, and at 8.30 our five guns commenced to fire; the three of the redoubt on our right followed. A few minutes later the Russians responded—that is, we heard detonations a mile or so north, and occasionally the whizzing of shells; but nothing could be seen; I do not know where the shells struck.

This went on for half an hour; then it grew a little clearer, so that we could see the flashes of the Russian batteries, like lightning in a white cloud. Our gunners re-directed their pieces accordingly.

At ten it grew sufficiently clear to see the enemy's lines through the glasses. A vehement cannonade commenced also in the south and south-east.

* The cigarette habit has decreased among the Turks proper in the last thirty years, whereas it has increased among the subject races. The notorious and typically eastern sexual vice has also decreased; an astonishing improvement has taken place in this respect among the Turks proper, and things in Constantinople and Smyrna are scarcely worse now than they are in Paris, London, or Berlin. This footnote is written in 1911, based on observations conducted in 1903, 1904, 1905, 1907 and 1908.

All the time we could do nothing but wait—"wait until we are struck," as one of my men grimly remarked, whom I reproved accordingly.

The range of the Russian guns was much too great. They must have been re-trained, for suddenly the projectiles commenced to fall in the space between ravine and redoubt. I counted through my glasses—judging by the locality of the flashes—forty guns, against which we had but eight on this spot.

It now grew clearer from minute to minute; the infantry attack was sure to take place as soon as the mist had gone. I made free to suggest to the captain to get the men to eat and drink; he acquiesced, so they went in relays to the water-tubs, established in convenient positions, and soaked their biscuits. The train soldiers refilled the casks.

At eleven it was perfectly clear, and the sun shone with merciless power. At 11.15 we were struck, the shot damaging the earthworks in front. It must have been midday when the first shell exploded in the redoubt. Two men from my squad were struck by splinters and were carried below. Three more shots exploded among us, two harmlessly, the last killing a gunner and wounding two of Jack's men, one in a ghastly manner, the bowels hanging out; he died soon after. Two or three shots struck the company (B) stationed to the left of the battery.

After that the range of the Russian shells quitted us again and went to our left, where the projectiles exploded harmlessly in the vacant fields.

Contrary to our expectation, no infantry attack took place; in fact, as yet not a single rifle had been discharged on either side. We had some more hours of nerve-straining suspense to go through, during which

the thunder of the guns never ceased for a second. It came from all sides: the two Bukova redoubts and the two Bash Tabiyas were doing their best with their few pieces; the south seemed like one mass of continual explosions; and also in the far north-west, near Opanetz, I saw through my glasses the flashes of discharging cannon, like electric sparks in the hazy, sunlit distance.

Our redoubt was not again struck that day; but that on our right received twenty or more shells.

We utilised the enforced leisure by patching the damaged earthworks and refilling our flasks with water and our bread-bags with biscuits. Later in the day the men of my company had reason to feel grateful for this precaution.

At 2.30 the fire relaxed on both sides, and just before 3 the first volley of musketry was heard in front of us. After a few minutes the rifle-fire approached us ("the Russians have taken the first trench!" said Mehemed, who stood with me on the parapet), and after another interval the sound again increased in volume ("The second trench is gone!"); then, for fifteen minutes, the fire remained at a uniform intensity: they were fighting for the ravine. We heard stray bullets cutting the air above us. The redoubt on our right was similarly engaged; sounds of volleys came also from the Bash Tabiyas and from behind us. At 3.30 we saw dense masses of our men, betraying symptoms of confusion, join those stationed in the nearest trench.

Speaking from memory I estimate the distances from redoubt to nearest trench at 300 yards, to ravine 400 yards, to foremost trench 600 to 700 yards.

Our men defended the nearest trench obstinately

for five minutes; but the smoke withdrew the details of the fight from my vision.

The bullets now came thick and fast; it is a wonder that Mehemed and I were not struck; but the idea did not occur to me until the captain shouted, "Get down!"

Our men were in position, only their heads exposed. Three of our five guns had been trained to fire at point-blank range; the other two continued to shell the five Russian batteries which honoured us with their ineffectual attention.

Suddenly a confused mass of men emerged from the last ditch (the five companies, *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, and *q*), and dividing into two parts, ran towards the side-trenches with more haste than dignity. There was now a sea of heads in the right side-trench, which I could overlook from where I stood. I saw the officers making strenuous efforts to reorganise the men. Before the Russians appeared the whole body (three companies, A, *p*, *q*) was in position and ready to fire.

I noticed that the horses were got out for removing our guns.

A few minutes after our skirmishers had reached shelter the assailants appeared.

They seemed to have no advance-line of skirmishers. Serried ranks of infantry—three battalions, I believe—climbed in a solid body the bank of the last ditch, and advanced in a line parallel to the redoubt. The attack was thus perfectly frontal.

Hardly had the Russians appeared when a dozen bugles sounded "Fire," and a terrific quickfire, coming from three sides (the redoubt and both side-trenches, defended by ten companies), and joined by the thunder of the guns, brought the enemy's advance to a deadstop.

The Russians retreated to the trench and the declivity beyond. After a while they renewed the attack, this time with a smaller body of men (one battalion, I should think), in a long-drawn-out line, which afforded a less advantageous target than the dense masses of the first attempt.

Dropping men at every step, they rushed towards us amidst a terrific fire from the flanks and the front. The battalion must have been as good as annihilated before it came within charging distance. The survivors surged back, and were swallowed up by a second line, which had meanwhile commenced to advance. A third followed at a short distance. These two got as far as the foot of the redoubt, and proceeded to climb the slope, which formed an angle of forty-five degrees. There was for a few moments a confusion such as I could not have conceived in the boldest flight of my imagination. I jumped upon the parapet, Ibrahim and his men beside me, the colours fluttering proudly above us. I discharged the six chambers of my revolver at hardly twelve paces distance. Soon all the men were on the parapet; the Russians surged towards, and recoiled from, the slope like the waves of a tempestuous ocean; there was a mighty roar, coming from some thousands of throats, a roar which rose and fell like that of the storm-tormented surf; the guns fired into the charging mass; in the side-trenches volley succeeded volley with terrific rapidity and murderous effect, and back went the Russian lines in a state of hopeless chaos, the ground strewn with dead and dying. Mehemed and some men rushed down the slope, but the captain shouted and waved his sword frantically, and they had to come back, with the aid of ropes held out to them. "All men

behind the parapet," was the next command, and from our old positions we pursued the Russians with a merciless fire, until they had disappeared in the trench and the ravine.*

It was only now that I perceived the captain leaning heavily against the parapet, the blood streaming from his shoulder. He had received a shot just as he was preparing to jump down. He was led below, and Mehemed took command, shouting lustily: "Company so-and-so will listen to my orders!"

There was now a cessation of fire on both sides, and we had time to ascertain our losses. My company had one killed and seven severely wounded; these were taken below, where they received first-aid. Afterwards they were removed to Plevna in the carts which stood ready for the purpose.

Two of our five guns had been taken out of the redoubt whilst the charge was in progress. These were now brought back.

The majority of the Russians lying below (400, I should think) seemed to be dead; I presume, therefore, that the assailants took many wounded with them, a difficult matter in the confusion of a repulsed charge. A good many wounded were carried into the side-trenches by our men.

Soon the Russians recommenced to fire from the third trench in a desultory manner.

Half an hour later a second assault took place, by fresh troops apparently—two battalions, so far as I could judge. The incidents were much the same as before. The enemy, unmindful of the fire from the

* This was the Russian Regiment Pensa, which, on that day, lost all its officers, 75 per cent. of its non-commissioned officers, and nearly two-thirds of its men.

side-trenches, got again as far as the foot of the redoubt, and was repulsed with heavy loss. Our major had meanwhile issued strict orders that no one should climb the parapet. Thus we had but two fresh casualties in my company. One was the first-lieutenant, whose stalwart form must have been a conspicuous object above the four-foot parapet. He was shot through the head, and fell lifeless on his back. Exit Mulazim Mehemed Hardar! My (I fear) joyful shout "The company will listen to my orders!" was his funeral-dirge.

"Checkmate at last," said Jack to me during the temporary lull. "He was as brave as a lion, although a bit of a slow-coach. What a glorious death! I say, aren't those Russians fools to break their heads against the solid wall of the redoubt? Why don't they try the side-trenches first?" To which I agreed.

I was now in command of the company, reduced to 140 combatants. I placed the first squad in charge of Tereb, the colour squad under Ibrahim's corporal, and mine under Sergeant Bakal. I had the dead removed out of sight, and nothing but the dark spots on the brown soil betrayed that they had existed.

There seemed to be a cessation of hostilities on all points of our wing; but in the south the battle continued with unabated fury.

Soon after the second charge I heard the major sing out: "Who commands this company?" Some one replied, "Mulazim Herbert." I presented myself to my superior, who said in substance, though not so coherently as I have put it, being breathless and excited:

"The Mushir has sent for reinforcements. On our right wing affairs are in a precarious condition: the

Russians have taken two redoubts, and are advancing south of the Bulgareni road ; if they succeed in throwing the right wing into Plevna *we* shall be taken between two fires and our retreat will be cut off. The reserves have been used up. The ferik has already sent our own reserves ; now two more companies from this redoubt are asked for. Take yours—an orderly from head-quarters will show you the way ; a company from the left side-trench shall follow, and two companies from the right side-trench will take your place in the redoubt."

As I collected my men two companies (*p* and *q*) came up from the right side-trench, and there was a momentary confusion. Soon we got clear and marched out, southward. A mounted man was waiting for us.

We had two and a half miles to march, which we accomplished in little more than half an hour.

Some minutes after we had started I noticed that men were following us who did not belong to my company. Without stopping the march I ascertained that these belonged to one of the skirmishing companies (*p*) which had taken shelter in the right side trench. Under ordinary circumstances I should have consulted Sergeant Bakal ; my new-born dignity as a company leader forbade this. There were forty men, under a lieutenant—a stripling, with the pluck of a bull-dog—who had misunderstood his directions, or, possibly, had received none. A brief reflection convinced me that they were wanted more in the south, where things looked black, than with the troops in the north, who had been victorious ; so I incorporated them temporarily in my company, having thus 180 men, divided into four squads, not counting the colour squad.

We crossed the Grivitza by means of the bridge which lies half-way between Plevna and Grivitza,* then trotted for half a mile on the Bulgareni road westward, turned to the left across fields, and approached a gently sloping hill, in front of that occupied by headquarters and the centre batteries, which were firing incessantly. Behind the latter lay Plevna. I saw masses of Russian infantry a mile to the left; ours was on the crest of the hill, evidently reorganising itself. The ground between the two lines was strewn with corpses. Two of our redoubts, farther south, were in Russian hands, as I could see by means of my glasses.

The slope of the hill, partly fields, partly devastated maize plots, was perfectly bare; there were no hedges, fences, or ditches, no sheds, huts, or houses.

I overlooked a battle-field of, perhaps, twenty square miles in area—an aspect of indescribable grandeur, which utterly surpasses the abilities of my pen; but even more awful than the effect upon the vision was that on the sense of hearing. The uninterrupted thunder of 240 guns—like the angry growl of a horde of roused watch-dogs in the distance, like the crashes of a whole mountain-range of active volcanoes in our vicinity—seemed to imply that the *dies iræ* had come, *quœ solvet sœcula in favilla*. Beneath me the earth trembled like a living thing in the throes of terrific fever-heat, whose nerves had been strained to breaking-point. I felt as if I stood in the centre of a raging conflagration; the scene was one immense furnace, and a piece of history was being cast and moulded and hammered into shape.

* There were in those days four bridges across the Grivitza: firstly—starting west—that on the Plevna—Bukova road; secondly, that on the Nikopoli road; thirdly, that on the Bulgareni road; fourthly, in Grivitza.

A mounted officer rode up to meet us, gesticulating to us vehemently to make haste. I went up to him (I believe it was Osman's aide-de-camp, Talahat Bey.*), and I reported myself as temporary leader of the company.

This was our hurried conversation :

He : " Are your men fresh ? "

I : " Not quite, sir, but thoroughly brave and willing."

He : " Can you take a place in the first line ? "

I : " Certainly we can, sir."

He : " Then come along, and hurry up."

We ran the rest of the way, and were soon amidst a mass of infantry, seven or eight battalions, who appeared to me to be in thorough confusion, and much demoralised.

A first line of attack had already been formed, into which we were incorporated.

Later I ascertained the following details :—

The first line consisted of my company ; the two companies (*d* and *t*) which had formed the reserve of our redoubt, and had not fought yet ; an entire battalion, also fresh, the last of the general reserve of eight battalions ; a company (*r*) which had come close upon our heels from the left side-trench of my redoubt ; with two squadrons of regular cavalry on each flank : total, say, 1000 foot soldiers and 350 mounted men, under the command of Talahat Bey.

The second line consisted of two battalions from the mass of defeated infantry, which had been reorganised and had recovered a little ; two companies, nearly

* The correct pronunciation of this Arabic name is Tala'at, but the Turks always put an "h" between the two "a's," though they did not do so in the case of Rifa'at. As a rule the Turks, like the Europeans, leave the Arabic guttural "'ain" unpronounced.

fresh, sent from the redoubt on the right of mine; and a large body of scattered and recollected skirmishers and stragglers belonging to half a dozen battalions, hastily formed into two or three companies, and placed under officers who had lost their troops; with a squadron of Ottoman Cossacks on one flank and a body of Circassians on the other: total, say, 1500 foot soldiers and 150 mounted men, under the personal command of the Mushir.

The third line consisted of two more reorganised battalions from the defeated infantry aforesaid (which two battalions had lost half of their companies, strayed, scattered, or annihilated) and two companies of the battalion which had garrisoned Plevna, fresh, but arriving too late to take a place in the first or second line (the other companies of this battalion were engaged beyond the Tultchenitza ravine); with half a squadron of regular cavalry, and a detachment of mounted artillerymen divided between the two flanks: total, say, 800 foot soldiers and 100 mounted men, under Tahir Pasha.

A fourth and last line consisted of another reorganised battalion from the defeated infantry; another scratch company or two of collected strayers; and four companies sent at the last moment from the Bukova redoubts (here the fighting had not been severe); with half a squadron of Ottoman Cossacks on one flank and a miscellaneous body of horsemen scattered in previous charges on the other; total, say, 700 foot soldiers and 100 mounted men, under Hassan Sabri Pasha.

Total of the four lines: 4000 foot and 700 mounted men.

In rear of the four lines, as last reserve and

protection to the batteries, a disorganised mass of 2000 foot soldiers, gradually recovering that stubborn bravery which makes the Turkish infantry so formidable when it is on the defensive.

The third and fourth lines were not formed until the first and second had nearly spent their energies in repeated charges and the repulse of counter-charges.

All four lines and the greater part of the reserve got successively to close quarters with the enemy.

There were six or eight charges and counter-charges before the Russians retreated.

I arranged my company as follows: Seymour's and Sergeant Bakal's squads side by side in first line, three deep; Tereb's squad in second line, two deep; the squad from Company *p* in third line, in single rank. I stood between the two squads of the front line, the bugler, the drummers and the colour squad beside and behind me.

As near as I can judge it was now 6.30.

The cannonade in the north had recommenced almost as soon as we had left our redoubt. The three and a half centre batteries, increased by two which had been got out of the lost redoubts, with the exception of two guns (recovered afterwards), were directing a murderous fire on the Russian lines in front of us. I noticed that some guns on the Bash Tabiyas had faced round and were shelling the same enemy. The hostile artillery-fire on this spot appeared to me lax and ineffective; no shells struck our first line. It ceased as soon as the advance commenced.

There is one feeling which I recall gladly: that of witnessing, and having an individual, however infinitesimal, share in the making of history. Of this glorious sensation you that stoop over your office-desks

or haggle behind your shop-counters cannot have the faintest notion.

The Russian troops commenced to move. When they were within easy range we hailed them with a quickfire of two or three minutes' duration. I noticed deep gaps in their lines, which were promptly filled up.

They were allowed to approach as far as the foot of the hill. Then Talahat (who was close to me) rose in his stirrups, lifted his sword, and shouted the dread command: "tabor hujum" (the line will charge); my bugler sounded the charge; a dozen others responded; the bayonets were lowered; the huge column commenced to move, first slowly, increasing in velocity, the efforts of all officers being directed towards the maintenance of a straight line.

The command, "Feel each others' elbows!" flew from mouth to mouth.

Down the slope we rushed, the mounted officers leading.

"Close up there!" I shouted, noticing a gap in my front line.

Nearer and nearer we came; wild cries were started, and drowned individual voices; commands became useless.

Now only a hundred paces between the charging lines—and at last a collision like that between two railway trains.

I wish my pen were sufficiently capable to give some notion of the awful confusion of such a contact. A chaos of stabbing, clubbing, hacking, clutching, shouting, cursing, screaming men; knots of two or three on the ground, still fighting and clinging to each other in their death agonies; above the surging mass of heads the butt-ends of rifles rising and falling like

the cranks of numberless overheated engines; the mounted men with swords working at lightning speed; the colours bravely leading the way; horses charging into solid bodies of men, rolling over, burying beings already mutilated beneath them; frantic faces streaming with blood; the air reeking with the breath of thousands of panting creatures, like the hot winds of the desert—all the mad-houses of the world discharging their contents into this seething cauldron of human passion and iniquity.

As to my personal experience, I remember nothing. The actual contact, the psychological moment of such a charge, lasts barely a minute; and such a lifetime of experience is crowded into it that memory is hopelessly at fault. All I know is that I discharged the six chambers of my revolver, but at whom I have no notion; that my sword was stained with blood, but with whose I cannot tell; and that suddenly we looked at one another in blank surprise—for the Russians had gone, save those on the ground, and we were among friends, all frantic, breathless, perspiring; many bleeding, the lines broken, the tactical units dissolved; most of us jabbering, shouting, laughing, cursing, dancing about like maniacs.

The next thing I remember is the bugle command, "Fire," and we sped the retreating enemy with volley upon volley.

Then a mounted officer rode up, and shouted to me to re-form my company.

I managed to discover Jack, Ibrahim, Sergeant Bakal, all uninjured, the lieutenant from Company *p* with a gash in the cheek. Excepting the sergeant, we were panting, and acting like lunatics; the latter, perfectly cool, crunched a biscuit whilst he searched

for his men. We found two-thirds of the company; many were on the ground, others had gone astray. I re-formed my four squads, with a dozen strangers incorporated in their lines.

Fifteen or twenty minutes after the first charge the Russians returned. This time we did not advance to encounter them, but met them, stationary, with quickfire until they were close upon us, when they ran against a bristling wall of bayonets. I do not know by whose orders this took place, probably by nobody's; more likely it was a silent agreement among us. The enemy's charge was less vigorous than before; no sooner were they in bodily contact with us when the opposing lines dissolved again into their elements and the Russians withdrew.

Of this second charge one item is deeply impressed on my memory. A giant on a horse to match—a colonel, I think—galloped up to me, and dealt me a terrific blow from above. I parried as well as I could—had I not done so he would have split my skull in two; but his sword cut across my upturned face, across nose and chin. I felt the hot blood trickle down my throat. When I looked out for my opponent, he had been swallowed by the surging sea of humanity.

When we were again left to ourselves, not having yielded an inch of ground, Bakal spoke to me, pointing to my face; Jack said something in a compassionate voice. I replied; but what they said and what I answered I cannot recall, for I was bewildered, and my memory is utterly confused—it was so even immediately after the battle. As in a trance I noticed that the troops of our second line came up; that they pushed forward in front of us, and stationed themselves below us, nearly at the bottom of a hill; that they opened a

violent and long-sustained fire. Vaguely I recollect that I perceived my garments on throat and breast to be soaked; that my face began to burn unmercifully and my head to swim; that I found myself kneeling, with a willing hand held out to me for support; and then all is a blank.

It seemed to me as if I had been insensible for weeks, whereas it can only have been an hour, or less. It was still daylight when I awoke. The firing in the neighbourhood had ceased, but from afar came the angry growl of the cannonade.

The sight that met my opening eyes was one so ghastly that I hardly care to recall it.

Imagine the interior of a low, long, roughly built, windowless shed. Imagine a thick, hot, reeking atmosphere, filled with indescribable odours, enough to sicken you by the very recollection. Imagine some hundreds of men—yourself among them, with a raging thirst devouring you, a burning pain in the face, every particle of strength and vitality gone—lying on the bare boards, with bundles of rags or filthy straw for pillows, many insensible, many dead or dying, many in convulsions, some horribly mutilated, all bleeding, most of them groaning, others screaming, or pitifully whining for a drop of water, in half a dozen languages. Oh that cry for "Su!"—how often have I heard it! After the lapse of years it followed me into my wildest dreams. Imagine surgeons, with tucked-up shirt-sleeves and bloody hands, giving first-aid; for this was a temporary ambulance, in rear of the lines. Imagine callous men dealing out homœopathic doses of water, or laudanum, or brandy. Imagine everything that is most horrible, disgusting, sickening, hideous, heartrending, within the range of your conception,

and you will have a faint notion of this hell of man's creation.

Recollection gradually returned to me. My head had been bandaged, the nose and chin plastered all over. Water was given to me.

I closed my eyes, to shut out the horrors around me. Oh, could I but have closed my ears! I dozed uneasily. Presently my arm was touched. It was a young private from my squad, a clerk by profession, who had been my companion on the journey from Constantinople to Widdin. Candles and lanterns were now burning. What a subject for Doré, these alternating patches of light and shade, with the horrors revealed by the crude glare, like bold sketches in black and white, and the worse horrors suggested by the shadows!

The man said, in substance—

"Don't talk, sir; you are very weak; you must have lost a bucket of blood. Mulazim Seymour sends me; he, being now in command of the company, cannot come himself, but sends his greeting. He has a bruise on the arm from a rifle butt-end. Mulazim Ibrahim and Chawush Mustafa have not received a scratch. The company lost ten men since you left us. We are now bivouacking on the hill whence we charged; fifty men have gone astray, but I dare say they will turn up in the redoubt. Everything is in a frightful confusion; whole battalions are without officers, and scores of officers are wandering about in search of their troops. Everything is upside down. When the men have recovered a little we shall go back to the redoubt. Mulazim Seymour meant to return at once, but the men fell down like lead with fatigue. The battle is won on all points. There has been awful

slaughter; the last action was child's play compared to this. Now, sir, Mulazim Seymour advises you to walk at once to Plevna, for which purpose he has instructed me to accompany you. Going in the carts is painful for a wounded man; besides, you will not have a chance yet for hours to find a place in one, as they send the urgent cases first, and by then the ambulances may be full. The Chawush, who bound your wound up, thinks it is not severe, although the chin was divided to the bone and the flesh stood wide apart. It looked ugly. You fainted from loss of blood, and will soon be strong again."

He had said all this glibly, probably in order to prevent me from talking. Having finished, he helped me on my feet, got me some brandy—which he stole from the apothecary's stock when the latter's back was turned—and off we went, he with his right arm around my waist, I with my left on his shoulder. Dusk had set in. There was still the faint thunder of cannon in the far north-east.

The distance to the eastern outskirts of Plevna was a mile, and half a mile more to the ambulance of which I had been an inmate before. The walk was very painful, I being so weak that I had to rely entirely upon my companion's strength, who was tired enough to require support on his own behalf.

From every side came long processions of conveyances of all shapes and sizes, from the spacious waggon to the decrepit wheelbarrow, drawn by oxen, horses, mules, donkeys, dogs, men. The coarse track and the roughly built vehicles must have been sources of torture to the mutilated passengers, who were huddled up on straw, and whose groans were heartrending. Groups of wounded, supported like myself, or carried by

comrades, or borne on stretchers, more often on crude appliances improvised out of rifles, tent-poles, boards, pieces of furniture, hurried, as to a common centre, from all points of the compass towards Plevna, the goal. Solitary men crawled along by themselves as best they could, leaving trails of blood behind. I noticed a Russian lieutenant who, after he had crept for a little space, sat down by the side of the track, leaning against the belly of a dead horse, and calmly awaited death in awful forsakenness. We passed him. He counted barely twenty summers. He looked at me, oh! so wistfully and sadly, with the sweet, divine, light of deliverance shining in his eyes. He said faintly, "De l'eau, monsieur." I had some cold coffee left in my flask, which I got my companion to pour down his throat. He bowed his poor bruised head, and we left him to die.

Knots of scattered soldiers were everywhere; many lay down among the dead, to snatch a few hours of sleep; others tried to find their troop in the general confusion. Whole companies, dead-beat, bivouacked on the spot where they had found themselves when the battle was over, many in defiance of orders. Groups of corpses, dead horses with their legs in the air, wounded horses moaning pitifully, demolished gun-carriages, broken-down carts, and other remnants marked the places where the shells had fallen. Bearers were still picking up wounded men left previously for dead. The ground was strewn with haversacks, shattered rifles, swords; was torn up by wheels and hoofs, by the tramp of thousands. Riderless horses, neighing vehemently, trotted about in small herds in search of food.

These sights were revealed to me by the peaceful,

dying light of a summer sunset. Even war, that hell-born product of the iniquity of monarchs and statesmen, receives its quota of sunshine. One would think the heavens would weep over such a scene.

Some civilians (Turks) were assisting the bearers. One, a stalwart, elderly man, dressed like a labourer, noticing that my companion, of small stature and exhausted, could hardly support me, offered to relieve him. The soldier returned to his company.

My good Samaritan had taken me as far as the first houses—it being dark by now—when I could bear the pain and the fatigue no longer. I declared to him that I could not proceed. He said—

"There is a small private ambulance from Sofia somewhere about here; it only arrived yesterday; let us find it."

Many Turkish inhabitants were about, rejoicing in the victory. These had behaved with great patriotism. I was told that from the flat roofs of the southern houses, whence the desperate encounter between Skobeleff and Yunuz Bey could be witnessed in close proximity, they had cheered the troops, although within bullet-range, and had supplied refreshments to them, not fearing to penetrate to the front line. They directed us, and we came to a small house, the door of which was, however, shut in our face by a coarse-looking Bulgarian woman. The Turk uttered an oath. We went to the next house, which was the right one.

The ambulance had only just completed its installation in a small private house placed at its disposal by the patriotism of the occupier and his family, who retained the kitchen and an outhouse.

One cart had already deposited its contents—four wounded. There was accommodation for seven more.

These came within the next hour, and before midnight we had twenty patients.

The staff consisted of a surgeon, an assistant, two attendants, and a general servant.

My chin was examined and stitched up. The damage to the nose was trifling. I was stripped, put into a comfortable camp-bed ; had beef-tea, rice, eggs, milk, and medicine to ease the pain, and was left to my devices when the next batch of maimed arrived. Most of these were amputation cases.

The continual rattling of cart wheels, the tramp of stragglers in search of a night's shelter, prevented me from going to sleep.

Many times I overheard a conversation outside, which in English would run somewhat as follows :—

" Who is that ? "

" Cart with wounded, sir—six men—five Turks and a Russian."

" Full up ; can't take another case in."

" They all say that, sir. Am I to cart the poor fellows about all night ? "

" Can't help it, my friend. We can't do impossibilities."

The door is closed, and off goes the grumbling driver, with his maimed and moaning freight, in search of an asylum.

Towards midnight I had more food. There were now two co-sufferers, Turks, in the small, low room, which had but little furniture. Both had had limbs amputated, and were sleeping off the effects of chloroform. Next day I saw a man burying legs and arms in the back garden.

At last I fell asleep, and did not awake until roused for breakfast.

The following is an outline of this battle :—

As on July 20, the Russians (two corps), under General Krüdener, attacked from four sides : from the north, the north-east, the east, and the south.

In the extreme north there was some desultory fighting near Opanetz ; but the Russian general (Loschkareff) had the foolishly premature idea of directing his attention to the Vid and our line of retreat ; thus he withdrew his force from the general action, and served, finally, only as cover to the retiring columns.

The force coming from the north-east, under General Weljaminow, attacked the bulk of our left wing—among others my redoubt—without success. After the departure of my company the enemy possessed himself of the side-trenches, but was at length routed. I have it on the authority of at least a hundred eye-witnesses that the Russian retreat resolved itself into a flight of the wildest description. Even Russian writers admit this ; Kuropatkin uses the characteristic phrase, " A non-orderly retreat."

The force coming from the east, under General Prince Schachowskoy, attacked the main body of our right wing, conquered two redoubts, and pressed westward on Plevna, penetrating wedgewise between the two wings. After I had been wounded charges and counter-charges followed one another in quick succession. Towards sunset the Russians were defeated and the two redoubts retaken. Here also the enemy's retreat was no better than a flight.

In the south, General Skobeleff, the most capable of the Russian leaders, not only held his own in and west of the Tultchenitza Valley and along the Krishin road, against the forces opposed to him under Yunuz

Bey, but even gained some immaterial advantages. Reluctantly he obeyed the command directing a general retreat, which his column alone effected in good order.

Next morning some of the Russian batteries and a fresh regiment came back within shelling distance and reopened fire. The Mushir sent all the available cavalry, a light battery, and a battalion of infantry. There was a smart encounter; both sides received reinforcements. For a moment it looked as if the action would be renewed; but the Russians thought better of it, and resumed the retreat. No pursuit took place; for, truly, the Turks were not in a condition to pursue.

Of the Turkish force (20,000 men, fifty-seven guns) I have already given details. The Russians give their strength as thirty-six battalions and thirty squadrons —total, 40,000 men, with 176 guns.

The whole of the Turkish force had taken part in the action, except the battalion stationed near the Vid bridge.

The losses on our side amounted to 2000 killed and *hors de combat*, besides some thousands of minor accidents not necessitating sojourn in the ambulances.

Recent writers state the Russian losses at 7500 killed and wounded; eyewitnesses, the newspapers, and earlier authors gave the figure as 10,000. Probably the truth lies between the two extremes.

We buried 1000 Turks and 3000 Russians. We had 1000 wounded prisoners. The despatch to Sofia of those wounded who could be moved commenced on July 31.

The statements, made by partisans, of Turkish soldiers killing the wounded, are fabrications. The

wounded prisoners were treated in exactly the same manner as their Turkish brethren. Isolated instances of barbarism will happen in every war and among the most civilised troops (*vide* the horrible occurrences in Bazeilles during the battle of Sedan), but it is a lie to say that maltreatment of the wounded or prisoners was habitual, or even frequent, with the Turks.

The Turkish Army was in a state of terrible confusion after the battle, but by August 1 it had already completely reorganised itself. If we, the victors, were in such a condition, what must have been that of the vanquished ?

On August 1 or 2 we received from Orkanyé a reinforcement of four battalions, of which two were sent to Lovdcha, increasing its garrison to eight battalions. We had thus thirty-five battalions in Plevna, or 25,000 men ; for bodies of young recruits arrived, who were distributed among the companies which had suffered most. At this figure our force remained until the beginning of September.

* * * * *

Russia was much in the condition of a man who, having gone up to one lying on the ground, presuming him to be dying, with the intent of depriving him of some of his belongings, had received from him two kicks so vigorous, well-directed, and painful as to remember them until the end of his days.

Like the crash of doom there came to astounded Russia the sudden conviction that the "Sick Man" had given the most unmistakable signs of the strongest possible vitality. The Russian headquarters retired from Tirnova to Bulgareni ; Gourko was called back across the Balkans ; East Roumelia was evacuated ;

the Czarevitch retreated behind the Lom; the active co-operation of Roumania, hitherto contemptuously declined, was now as greedily accepted; ten more divisions were ordered to be mobilised; the pretty and fanciful dream of a personally conducted military pleasure-excursion to Stamboul was rudely shattered, and for four and a half months the Russo-Turkish war turned upon this one momentous question: "Will Plevna stand or fall?" For four and a half months one man, rising to the sublimest height to which manhood can ascend, proudly bade defiance to all the forces which Russia's inexhaustible resources and vindictive rage could hurl at him, succumbing only to starvation—an auxiliary invoked by the calculating genius of a Todleben, of Sebastopol fame, who succeeded by dint of patience where the impetuosity of a Gourko and a Skobeleff had failed.

The Grand Duke Nicholas, the Russian Commander-in-Chief, expressed the situation after the battle with unconscious terseness in his famous telegram to Prince Charles of Roumania: "Come to our aid. Cross the Danube where you like, how you like, under what conditions you like, but come quickly to our aid. The Turks are annihilating us. The Christian cause is lost."

CHAPTER VIII

AN INTERVAL OF INACTIVITY

July 31 *to September* 6, 1877

I STAYED in the ambulance for four or five days, dividing my time between smoking, eating and drinking, and sleeping. Talking was painful, owing to my wounded chin. I rose on the first day, hearing the distant cannonade, contrary to the surgeon's orders, and was summarily and rudely restored to my couch. On the third or fourth day, when I had grown stronger, I got up, and assisted the overworked attendants. My bedroom mates had, for an hour or two, angrily lamented the loss of their limbs; but as the Turk has in a high degree the wonderful gift of adapting himself to circumstances, they were soon resigned and cheerful.

The food was good and plentiful; I grew quite fastidious. There were no Russians in the house. Eight men were sent to Sofia, much against their will: for we were very comfortable, and the cart journey presented no agreeable prospect. I had the option of going, but preferred to stay and rejoin my company after recovery. Our full complement of twelve cases remained in the house; with the exception of mine,

these were all grave ones. Two terminated fatally during my convalescence.

The wound in my chin was painful, particularly at meal-times, but healed unexpectedly well and rapidly. My chief complaint was weakness through loss of blood, but a fine constitution and abundant food overcame this speedily.

The surgeon—a physician in good practice in Sofia, a Bulgarian by descent, but Mahomedan, and passionately devoted to the Turkish cause, a good linguist, and highly educated—had equipped, and was working, the ambulance at his own expense, supported by contributions from patriotic friends. He was skilful and clever, but rough in manner and taciturn. The assistant was a fledgeling in the medical profession, gentlemanly, with a *penchant* for Englishmen and British institutions; he spoke English, having "walked" a London hospital. The attendants were good-natured and willing, but ignorant.

The assistant and the attendants kept us *au courant* of events. Nothing exceptional happened. No enemy was within fifteen miles of our positions. We heard of the general retreat on all points of the Russian forces. The building of redoubts had recommenced with great vigour.

A corporal from my company called on the second or third day, whom Jack had sent as escort to a train of carts with picked-up rifles. He brought me a pencil note somewhat in this strain—

"Dear old fellow,—Am getting on well; bruise black and blue and painful, but nothing to cry about. Hope to see you soon, restored, to lead us once again to victory. Hope the boss will have a long convalescence. Very busy assisting another battalion (rank

duffers) in building a fresh redoubt. Wasn't that a day! I had some sort of a company left when the fighting was over, but half of the men were strangers; twenty-four hours later stragglers were still coming in. I can now account for all the men save one, whom I have definitely reported as missing. Russia in a funk, according to latest news.—Yours, JACK."

I gave the corporal part of my midday ration, and learnt details of my company's doings after I had been incapacitated.

I heard that our ferik, Adil Pasha, had his sword broken by a blow from a rifle butt-end; that the Mushir had inspected the troops' positions on the night of the battle as late as eleven o'clock; that there was talk in camp of the Russians having offered an armistice.

Speaking from memory, I should estimate that my company had lost—

Officers: killed, one (the first-lieutenant); wounded two (the captain and myself); slightly wounded, one (Seymour). Men: killed, ten; wounded, twenty; minor accidents, twenty or twenty-five; missing, one.

Thus we were reduced to 120 combatants. During August we received twenty recruits; ten men recovered in the ambulances and rejoined us. Deducting five invalided through illness, we had 145 in the September battle. There were no deserters until November; then we had two.

We had some old newspapers supplied to us: several Turkish, one English, one French. Needless to say I devoured their contents, however stale. The Turkish journals I handed over to my fellow-patients, who were disgusted with the meaningless, bombastic rubbish they contained. I had received no letters

since leaving Widdin. The postal arrangements were beneath criticism.

On the last day of my stay the assistant procured me a Turkish woman's garments (for want of tolerably clean male clothes, so he said, but I think he did it by way of a joke); these I donned in order to wash my own clothes, which were stiff with blood, in the back garden. It must have been a sight for the gods, with my face closed for repairs! A Turkish maiden —young, handsome, and winning, to judge from eyes, movements, shape, voice, talk, and her lovely bare arms—assisted me, with an old, shaking, grandfatherly man as a sort of male duenna. She took good care to inform me that he was deaf. I learnt the conjugation of the verb "sevmek" (to love) in all its innumerable derived forms (except the negative one), moods, and tenses. When the old gentleman had the complaisance to fall asleep in the sun, I ascertained that in Turkish the phrase, "We shall be able to kiss one another," can be expressed in a single word. To discover this the veil had to be removed, and reality did not belie surmise. When we had arrived at this stage of our studies the assistant called out to me in English that the surgeon and the girl's father (the owner of the house) were coming up the street together. The girl, on my translating this, said—also by means of a single word—"You will be unable to make me love you," and flew indoors like a frightened gazelle. I returned to my washing-tub. The old gentleman awoke with a start. I told him that I had sent the girl away, as she was idle and useless. He shuffled indoors on his palsied legs muttering: "All women are bundles of mischief."

When my clothes had dried before the kitchen-fire

and the rents and holes had been mended by the maiden's nimble fingers, I dressed, and took leave of my various friends. Acting on instructions received from the surgeon, I presented myself at an arsenal established in a mosque, and received a sword and a revolver, mine having been lost; also a fresh tunic and a pair of trousers, which I made up into a bundle. There seemed to be an abundance of everything. Then I called upon my captain, who was in the ambulance of which I had been an inmate on the first occasion. Here also they had their full complement of patients—sixty, having had eighty on the night of the battle.

The captain was weak and depressed, although the wound in the shoulder was healing well. Some splinters of bone had been removed. I had a long conversation with him, but refrained from transmitting Jack's pious wish. He was going to Sofia on the following day.

On my way to camp I was fortunate enough to be overtaken by a train of pack-horses. I rode on one, sitting on the packages sideways. In this dignified attitude I reached the redoubt, where I was hailed with every token of sincere joy. Needless to say, Jack was delighted. I reported myself to the major and resumed command of the company.

For three weeks we lived in a state of *dolce far niente*, the daily routine of muster, inspection, and outposts excepted. Our vigilance was not relaxed, but might have been so without any appreciable difference; for the Russians made no attempt to surprise us, or even to approach our positions.

We had glorious weather. In our domestic arrangements we were as comfortable as men living

in a redoubt can be. The health of the troops was, on the whole, satisfactory; once the surgeons ran out of quinine, and as there were a few fever cases, some anxiety was felt; but they made a concoction of the bark of a native tree do duty (every man a dose a day), until a supply arrived. Food was good and plentiful; there was a large store of almost every necessary in town. The supply of many minor articles, such as soap, candles, matches, salt, sugar, was irregular, and not to be relied upon; but Jack and I had foreseen this, and taken in a goodly stock of these commodities in Plevna previous to the battle. Coffee did not then form part of the rations of the Turkish soldier, although on three or four days in the week this beloved luxury was dealt out as an extra; by dint of economising we managed to have at least one cup daily.

We were kept informed of all that was going on in the world. The Russian retreat on all points caused immense satisfaction in camp, though the new offensive alliance with the Roumanians, and the latter's passage of the Danube at Corabia, were a source of anxiety to the better-educated officers.

The Mushir must have been in almost hourly communication with Constantinople, to judge from the way in which he was informed of all that was going on outside. At that time our telegraph to Orkanyé and Sofia was still intact. There was a daily meeting of the superior officers at headquarters. The news obtained by these was disseminated in camp.

In the beginning of August a letter addressed by the Sultan to Osman was read by the ferik during parade. His Majesty, speaking in the name of the

Ottoman nation, thanked the Mushir and his gallant little army for the double victory, and forwarded him a costly present, a sword studded with diamonds. We cheered lustily.

The list of promotions was read out, and I had the gratification of hearing myself mentioned as mulazim evvel. The rise carried with it the magnificent increase of pay of 50 piastres (9*s.*) a month. They might as well have quintupled my pay, for all the difference it made in my finances.

Many additional redoubts were built during August. I shall give a detailed list of the Turkish positions when dealing with the September battle. Telegraph-lines were laid down by the engineers, connecting headquarters with the redoubts near Bukova and Opanetz, with the Bash Tabiyas, and with the Krishin redoubts.

An infectious desire, which never relaxed till Plevna fell, seized the soldiers to dig themselves in like moles. Apart from the great redoubts occupied by battalions and batteries, with their systems of front and flank trenches, there were minor entrenchments innumerable for outposts and sentries; sheltered ways connecting the redoubts with each other; for the reserves and stores, protected encampments and magazines in the rear. Many of these were erected by company leaders, and sometimes by non-commissioned officers, on their own initiative. I, personally, caused to be erected several small works, none of which were originally marked in the plans.

About August 15 I was summoned to the ferik, who asked me if I could speak French sufficiently to act as a *parlementaire* to the Russian camp. I replied, truthfully, in the affirmative. A letter was given to me addressed to the commander of the Russian army

east of Plevna. I was bidden to read it. It dealt, firstly, with diplomatic complications arising from the capture by the Russians of some English and German medical men in the Turkish service, whose unconditional return to the Turkish camp the Mushir demanded as a matter of justice, equity, and international courtesy, whilst the Russians treated these gentlemen as prisoners-of-war; secondly, with the question: Is the Red Crescent, the Ottoman equivalent of the Red Cross, protected under the Geneva Convention like its Christian prototype?

Considerations of space forbid my describing this experience, which was pleasurable throughout, and included a good deal of champagne. I executed my commission to Adil's satisfaction, and on the following day a Russian *parlementaire* arrived at Grivitza with a reply—I believe an autograph letter from the Grand Duke Nicholas. What it contained I have not learnt.

Our camp-life went through its monotonous daily round; up to August 31 neither gun nor rifle shot was fired within my hearing. We were told of Suleiman's brave though unsuccessful attempts upon the Shipka Pass, and were waiting with anxiety for information of a decisive offensive movement on Mehemed Ali's part, and for orders to advance. We managed to have plenty of fun—games, wrestling and fencing matches, chess, domino, improvised concerts, *al fresco* dances, and even theatricals. Turkish men do not dance, so this amusement was confined to us few Europeans, and to those officers who had been in the Occident, and had learnt Western customs. Jack and I were always the ladies, and our ball costumes, consisting of garments "borrowed" in town and cut extravagantly low in the neck, with long trains improvised out

of sacking; our huge bouquets of straw, corn-cobs, and cabbage-leaves; our enormous fans made of ox-hide; our curtseys, smirks, pretended flirtations, and kisses like rifle-discharges, made the onlookers laugh so much that many begged us to desist, with tears in their eyes. Occasionally Jack donned a Bulgarian girl's complete costume, and some farce he enacted with our kiatib (clerk), the apothecary of another battalion, and a corpulent German doctor from Plevna dressed as a mother-in-law in grey sacking, made us fairly shriek; I do not think I ever laughed so much in my life. But orders came down to stop this game, as it tended to undermine the officers' authority; and, to our regret, the "Theatre Royal, Janik Bair Redoubt," was closed.

Our chief trouble was the increasing scarcity of tobacco. There was not an ounce left in Plevna; we had "borrowed" the town bare. Fancy my surprise when Bakal, having asked for six hours' leave one morning, came back in the afternoon with three pounds of Servian tobacco. Heaven only knows where he had obtained it; it was not to my interest to ask.

I must give a brief account of the minor actions which took place between the second and third battles of Plevna, in none of which my battalion had a share, rather to our regret, for we grew tired of idleness.

On August 6 a Russian detachment under Skobeleff attacked Lovdcha. The Mushir sent five battalions, 200 Circassians, and three guns, under Emin Pasha, to the aid of Rifa'at Pasha, who had, however, beaten back the enemy before the reinforcement arrived. The Russians left 300 corpses behind, and must, therefore, have had 1000 casualties. The Turkish losses were under 100. Emin returned to Plevna with

his force, and exchanged a few shots with the enemy on the way.

By the end of August the Russian West Army occupied a semicircular position; the arc being open to the west, with a radius of seven miles, Plevna forming the centre. The northern extremity of the arc rested on Ribina, the southern on Bogot. The force consisted of two corps (the Fourth under General Krylow, the Ninth under General Krüdener) and a cavalry division, General Sotow being the commander. To this were added early in September several Russian detachments and three Roumanian divisions, and Prince Charles became nominally the commander, Sotow being his chief-of-staff.

On August 30 the Mushir organised an offensive movement on a large scale towards Pelishat. The operating force consisted of nineteen battalions, three batteries, seven squadrons of regulars, two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks, ten squadrons of Saloniki mounted auxiliaries, who had joined us a day or two before, and 300 Circassians, under Osman's personal orders, with Hassan Sabri Pasha—now promoted to ferik rank—as second-in-command. To protect the Plevna camp there remained behind sixteen battalions (among them mine), six and a half batteries, and the rest of the Circassians, under Adil Pasha.

The dispositions for the undertaking were kept secret: it was not until a few hours before the actual start that it became known in camp that something was in contemplation. The column left camp at dusk on the 30th, bivouacked on and near the Pelishat road, two miles east of Plevna, and started at daybreak on August 31. Some hours afterwards we heard the growl of cannon in the south-east. We were anxious

and excited. The suspense became worse when Adil Pasha despatched, during the afternoon, three battalions, and 100 packhorses with ammunition, as a reinforcement for the Mushir; almost unbearable when a Russian detachment appeared east of Grivitza, and Adil sent hurriedly four battalions (among them mine) to protect the Bash Tabiyas. But the Russians had retired before we arrived, and we returned to our redoubt.

In the evening it was made known that the column was returning after having done what it was supposed to do, viz. clear up the uncertainty as to the Russian position. We officers, however, could not help looking upon the action as a failure.

Late at night the column returned, having suffered a loss of 300 killed and 1000 wounded; the latter were brought back. The Russians state their losses at 1000. Our troops had a Russian gun as trophy. The fighting had been extremely severe; one Russian redoubt had changed hands four times.

On the same day (August 31) commenced the Mahomedan month of fasting and festivals, Ramazan. There were some religious ceremonies, a great deal of spouting and speechifying by the priests attached to the camp, a lot of jollification, but no fasting.* I was in town next day, on business connected with a supply of new clothing, and attended a festival in a mosque, part of which was utilised as storehouse. There were no invalids in the ambulances, save those of yesterday's action; all those that had not recovered had been sent to Sofia. Plevna had regained much of its equanimity; shops were open, trade was brisk, municipal government and administration of justice

* Islamic law grants dispensation to soldiers on active service.

were carried on as usual. The Turks felt themselves safe and happy, sheltered, as it were, under Osman's strong wings; the Bulgarians were not molested as long as they conformed to the rules laid down by the authorities. No inhabitant was allowed to pass beyond our lines. The post was at work again, after a fashion, and I had early in September a letter from home. I wrote every week.

On this day (September 1), the wind coming from the south, we heard guns at Lovdcha. Soon it became known in camp that Rifa'at was engaged, and that the wire had been cut.

On the 2nd a column was formed, near Krishin, of twenty battalions, three batteries, and two squadrons. My battalion was again left behind. Sounds of shelling at Lovdcha continued all day.

On the 3rd, at midday, the column started, under the Mushir's personal command. It consisted of three brigades of six battalions each, commanded by Hassan Sabri Pasha, Emin Pasha, and Tahir Pasha, with a reserve of two battalions. Ahmed Pasha, the commander of artillery, Tewfik Bey, and the whole of the Staff, were with the Mushir. Adil became again temporary chief in Plevna, with fifteen battalions, six and a half batteries, and seventeen squadrons. All day long there was a furious cannonade in the south, for a short time also in close proximity; for the column was fighting on the way.

September 4.—Bad news and long faces: Lovdcha taken, the Lovdcha-Plevna road occupied, communication interrupted. Grave anxiety as to the Mushir's fate. Orders from Adil to be ready to start at a moment's notice. During the afternoon the Roumanians appeared north-east of our positions. My battalion,

called upon to defend two large redoubts in the absence of the four other battalions, was in position and ready for the fray for many hours, but had no fighting to do. We shelled the Roumanians, and the cavalry was sent forward by Adil; but the enemy had already disappeared. One of the worst days I have ever spent.

September 5.—Circassians sent by Osman, and arriving by a circuitous route, bring news that column is safe and is returning by a western road. Fugitives from Lovdcha arrive.

September 6.—Column returns to camp in the morning. We mourn for half an hour over the loss of Lovdcha, and then, soldier-like, regain our spirits. Remnants of the Lovdcha garrison enter camp by various routes in small bodies. Rain sets in.

What had happened was this: Lovdcha was defended by eight battalions, six guns, and some Circassians, under Rifa'at Pasha. On September 1 the Russians had appeared in strong numbers, cut the wires, and shelled the fortifications. On the following day the cannonade was renewed. Rifa'at saw himself compelled to evacuate one hill and send to Plevna for aid. Next day (September 3) the Russians, under the nominal command of General Prince Imeretinski, led really by Skobeleff, with twenty-five battalions, ninety-two guns, and fifteen squadrons, attacked, and were, of course, successful, considering their enormous numerical superiority. The Turks fairly excelled that day in obstinate defensive bravery—even the Russian writers admit this—and Rifa'at Pasha deserves mention as the Defender of Lovdcha. The fight lasted twelve hours. The Mushir's column arrived too late. The garrison of Lovdcha, or what remained of it, dispersed

in the neighbouring mountainous country ; most of the men arrived in Plevna camp during the following days. Rifa'at saved five guns out of his six ; these and a few companies he took with him on the road to Mikré ; but next day the detachment turned back, and proceeded by a circuitous route to Plevna, which it reached on the 6th.

The battle of Lovdcha cost the Turks 2500 killed, wounded, and missing ; the Russians give their losses at 1600. 22,000 Russians with ninety-two guns defeated 5000 Turks with six guns, and yet Kuropatkin calls this action " glorious ! "

The Mushir's column had proceeded on the 3rd by the high-road to Lovdcha, had seen Russian troops and a few protected batteries on the left, parallel with and facing the road, and had exchanged shots with them. The force took at dusk a quarter-circle position, the arc subtending on Lovdcha, the extreme left on the Lovdcha-Plevna road, three miles north of Lovdcha, the extreme right five miles west of the town. A flying detachment was sent to Mikré, fourteen miles south-west of Lovdcha, to cover Teteven and Etropol ; Troyan stood or fell with Lovdcha. In this position the troops bivouacked, full of anxiety ; for Lovdcha was silent—an ominous sign. Next morning cavalry scouts discovered the town to be in Russian hands. The Mushir assembled the officers, and placed this question before them : " Shall we attack or not ? " The matter was carefully considered, and the answer was in the negative. The return by the high-road was dangerous—owing to the Russian batteries on the western flank—if not impossible : for probably the Russians had meanwhile occupied the road (which, indeed, they had) ; so the column took, early on the

5th, the road, or rather path, *viâ* Novoselo, Silkova, Laskar, Baliéva, and thus to Krishin. Between Krishin and Ternina the troops bivouacked, and early on the 6th they entered Plevna.

On September 5 or 6 we received a reinforcement of eight battalions and two batteries from Orkanyé; the fugitives from Lovdcha were re-formed into three battalions. Our strength during the third battle of Plevna was, therefore, forty-six battalions, nineteen squadrons (viz. seven of regulars, two of Ottoman Cossacks, ten of Saloniki auxiliaries), 500 Circassians, twelve batteries; or, 30,000 men with seventy-two guns. At this figure (less casualties) our force remained until the arrival of the column from Orkanyé on September 24.

September 6 is the last date with which I shall deal in this chapter, as on the 7th commenced the cannonade which ushered in the greatest battle of the war.

The general idea which we in the Plevna camp inferred from the various reports that came to our ears was this—

Mehemed Ali had so far been successful on the Lom, and something decisive was now expected of him. Suleiman had done his best to reconquer the Shipka Pass, and had not been fortunate. In Asia the hostile forces were lying opposite one another; a big battle (Kizil Tepé, August 25) had remained undecided; several minor affairs had done neither harm nor good; the Russians were on the defensive along, and a little in advance of, the frontier line; the Turks had assumed the offensive without success. The performances of the fleet were a blank, and the English leader, on whom so much hope had been centred, was a disappointment.

On September 6 an order of the Mushir was read out, saying that the Russians were approaching with strong forces from all sides save the west, and that he expected to be attacked on the morrow, but that he felt no uneasiness, being convinced that the troops, with God's help, would repeat their splendid performances of the previous battles. We made our preparations for battle, were inspected by the ferik, offered up prayers to the Lord of war, and lay down fully dressed, arms in hand—that is, those of us who had no duties to do. I was up all night, visited twice the outposts and the sentries which my company had to furnish, and accompanied Major Taki and Adil's aide-de-camp on a tour of inspection.

The wind was high, and blew from the west, so that no sounds of the approaching enemy reached us. The weather, which had been splendid up to the 5th, had suddenly changed: it had turned chilly, the sky was overcast, and ominous clouds were chased swiftly by the growing gale. The night was very dark. That vague, indescribable feeling of awe and terror which precedes disaster crept repeatedly over me; I had to make strenuous efforts to shake it off and face boldly the inevitable, possibly death, that lay as yet hidden in the gruesome darkness, into which not a star, not a cottage window, not a spark of light of any kind, thrust a ray of brightness. The wind moaned dismally, and my excited fancy construed its rise and fall into the shrieks and groans of men in mortal agony. Time was in labour with a great event, and there issued forth from her womb a slaughter at which hell must have stood aghast.

When, in the ugly, misty grey dawn of a wet and boisterous day, I parted from the major, he had the

goodness to say that there was no company in our redoubt led better than that of which I was the temporary commander. I read a few Bible verses, kissed my mother's signature, and lay down to snatch an hour of rest.

The Plevna army consisted on September 6 of 3 divisions, each of twelve battalions, with a general reserve of 10 battalions.* The First Division had 4, the Second 3, the Third 2 batteries; 3 batteries were in reserve. Early on the 7th 2 battalions from the Third Division were transferred to the First; so that the First Division counted 14, the Second 12, and the Third 10 battalions.

The First Division, under Adil Pasha, formed the left wing, *i.e.* the north front and the eastern point.

The Second Division, under Hassan Sabri Pasha, formed the centre, *i.e.* the south-east front.

The Third Division, under Tahir Pasha, formed the right wing, *i.e.* the extreme southern flank.

The Reserve, under Rifa'at Pasha, occupied the headquarters hill, the town of Plevna, and the Vid bridge.

Our position was triangular in form, as in the battle of July 30, the extreme eastern point of the apex being in the Bash Tabiyas, the northern point of the base in Opanetz, the southern in Krishin; Plevna formed the centre of the base. The dimensions of the camp had not been extended since July 30, except in the south, towards Krishin; they were: north to south (Opanetz to Krishin), six and a half miles; west to east (Vid bridge to Bash Tabiyas), seven miles. Our lines included an area of twenty

* For *Ordre de Bataille* and list of fortifications, see Appendix.

square miles, and had a total length (exclusive of the non-occupied west flank) of sixteen miles.

Krishin, Opanetz, Bukova, and Grivitza were (by reason of their hostile populations) outside our positions, and never did at any time form part of the fortified camp of Plevna, which, except Plevna, contained no town or village.

My battalion was in the Janik Bair redoubt west, with two other battalions and a battery. Our colonel, the ferik, and the latter's staff, were with us; 300 yards in rear of the redoubt, on the southern slope of the Janik Bair, were the encampments of our redoubt reserves and of the two squadrons which belonged to our division, and our stores.

Of the twenty companies (8, 8, 4) which formed the garrison of the redoubt, eight (one battalion) occupied the front and flank trenches, four (half a battalion) the ditches connecting us with the redoubt in the east, and four (my battalion) the redoubt itself; whilst four (half a battalion) were as reserve in the rear, with the cavalry. The connection with the Bukova redoubts was maintained by companies detached from the garrison of the latter.

The constitution of my company had recently been modified. The first squad (late Lieutenant Hardar's) had been placed under Lieutenant Tereb; Sergeant Bakal led the second (my) squad; the third was under Lieutenant Seymour, as before; whilst the colour squad was officered by Lieutenant Murad Azif, who had arrived from Adrianople with a detachment of recruits in August. He was an alaïli (having lately been promoted), thirty years old, conscientious, pains taking, and reliable, but not brilliant, and almost illiterate. His habits were vulgar, but I liked him for

his disinterestedness: in spite of the difference of age, he obeyed promptly and cheerfully, and never questioned my authority or assumed airs. He came from the neighbourhood of Adrianople; his father was a captain of Zaptiés (gendarmes), and was then serving in Suleiman Pasha's army.

The principal features of our arrangements for the battle were as follows: We had 600 cartridges per man, and for the artillery 100 shells per gun, eight days' biscuits, a quantity of maize for porridge, bread, rice, some fruit, forage, and a few head of cattle per battalion. Each man carried eighty cartridges; boxes with 1000 cartridges stood in convenient positions in the trenches and the redoubt. There were two or three carts per battalion for removing the wounded, and a first-aid ambulance on the southern slope of the Janik Bair. The ox-carts, the packhorses, and the artillery waggons stood ready for saving the ammunition and stores. A regular mounted messenger service placed us in hourly communication with Opanetz, Bukova, the Bash Tabiyas, headquarters, and Plevna; a cavalry officer organised and superintended this. From Bash Tabiya north the wire connected us with headquarters. In both Janik Bair redoubts there was a pole, with ladder attached; these had been erected originally for the priests to mount when singing out the calls to prayers, but were used during the engagement as observatories. From our redoubt headquarters hill was visible (distance two miles), and a code of signals had been arranged. An officer equipped with a telescope had been detached for this work. In Bash Tabiya there was a skilled telegraphist with several assistants. The officers, down to the company leaders, had received note-books and pencils. All

watches had been regulated to a uniform time, sunset being always twelve o'clock.* Plans of the camp had been dealt out. At cross-tracks were signposts inscribed with the names of redoubts, commanders, and units. At regular intervals casks with drinking-water, tubs with biscuits, and boxes with salt had been placed in the redoubt and the trenches, and men were appointed to refill these at stated times. Cooking parties were organised and arrangements made to supply hot meals to the fighting-lines. For the hours of darkness each company was divided, so that one-third was on duty whilst two-thirds rested in turns of four hours, dressed, and arms in hand; in daytime the men were sent to the rear in relays for undressing and washing. From each battalion a party was detached and equipped with tools and lanterns, to repair any damage done to the works; oil was stored in covered holes in the ground. Each battalion had its own ambulance party for picking up the wounded, provided with roughly made stretchers. In each redoubt there was a party equipped with buckets for quenching conflagrations; these attended also to the water-supply. The sewage was disposed of in out-of-the-way spots, where holes had been dug. Each outpost had a small protective work, and each sentry a circular hole with raised banks as a shelter-pit. We were almost sorry that none of these excellent arrangements were called into play so far as our redoubt was concerned: for the latter was not attacked.

The commanders of the Vid bridge guard and the Opanetz redoubts, which formed, as it were, the western

* I have, of course, quoted Western time throughout this volume; needless to say, my time indications are more or less guesswork.

and northern doors of our position, had been instructed to maintain their posts until the last man had perished.

The Russian force attacking us in the great September battle had a total of 107 battalions, 91 squadrons, and 444 guns; about 100,000 men, of whom 12,000 were cavalry. The three Roumanian Divisions and the Ninth Corps formed the Russian right wing, the Fourth Corps the centre, the Imeretinski Detachment the left wing; cavalry was on each flank.

CHAPTER IX

THE THIRD BATTLE OF PLEVNA

September 7 to 12, 1877

I WAS roused at 6 a.m. on Friday, September 7, by Tereb, who, with his squad, formed the guard of the redoubt, and who said that cannon had been heard in the direction of Radishevo. I ordered my two drummers to beat the alarm, and in less than a minute the company was in position behind the parapet of the redoubt. The artillerymen were already at their stations; the other companies turned up a few moments later, and soon afterwards my major, the colonel, and Adil Pasha and his staff were among us.

The morning was raw and chilly; the wind had dropped; a drizzling rain exercised a dispiriting influence. The ground was slippery, the sky of a uniform grey colour. I mounted the parapet; but though it was clear with us, I could detect no enemy. In the south and south-east a white mist obscured the view. Soon it grew lighter and the rain ceased; it became close and oppressive; the air was still, heavy vapours hung over the ground.

Towards eight the cannonade grew louder in the south and south-east. I saw that the Bash Tabiyas

replied, but what the redoubts beyond the Bulgareni road did was hidden by the mist. Our battery merely fired one or two test shots: there was no enemy to fire at.

All day long till dusk the distant shelling continued. A fire broke out in an encampment at the back of the redoubt on our right, and the tents were shifted 500 yards to the west. In this my company assisted. In Atouf Tabiya there was also a flare. Some shells, coming from the east, exploded 200 yards in rear of our redoubt. At noon two battalions arrived from the south to reinforce the northern flank, as I have already stated; I presume the Mushir thought the bombardment in the south was intended as a feint, and that the real attack would take place against our left wing. In this he was mistaken. We remained in our positions during the day, and turned in at night in relays. We heard that the shelling had done hardly any injury to our works or our troops, and that no attack had been undertaken. During the night the Russians fired at intervals of twenty minutes from Grivitza and Radishevo.

The following day (September 8) was spent much in the same fashion. The weather was murky and threatening, but no rain fell. The hostile guns appeared to have moved nearer to our positions, to judge from the sound. I climbed our signal-pole, and noticed through the telescope that the Russians had erected a mast, with two men as outlooks, on the top of the hill across which leads the road to Pelishat. At midday the enemy's batteries came within 1500 yards of the Bash Tabiyas; from a suitable position I could see the dark lines through my glasses. During the afternoon Roumanian infantry appeared east of these works,

made a demonstration, and retreated on being received with rifle-fire. They left 200 killed and wounded behind; most of the latter were taken prisoners. We heard that in the south also the hostile artillery had approached. The Turkish shelling was more vigorous than on the previous day. In front of our redoubt no enemy was visible; but from Opanetz came the news that strong masses of Roumanian cavalry had been noticed drawing westward. In the evening we learnt that our right wing had been smartly engaged with Russian infantry between Krishin and Plevna, and that the Russians had suffered severely; as a matter of fact, Skobeleff lost 1000 men on this day. During the night the shelling continued at intervals; the Bash Tabiyas fired every fifteen minutes; the other Turkish works were silent. At midnight a false alarm was raised and we took up positions; heavy rifle-fire was heard in the east; the men in our front trenches fired at haphazard into the darkness, but no response was given; soon it grew quiet and we returned to our sleeping-quarters.

On the 9th the artillery duel was renewed at daybreak, with increased vigour so far as the Turkish guns were concerned. Weather much the same. Rain fell in the morning; later it cleared. The outlook reported at midday cavalry a mile north of our redoubt. Adil sent his two squadrons forward, a battalion from our redoubt followed; but the enemy disappeared towards the north-west, and our troops returned without having come to an engagement. In the afternoon the major told me that there had been an explosion of ammunition in Yunuz Tabiya, which had killed and wounded fifty men; with this exception the damage done by the Russian shells had been trifling. Our

troops in the north were anxious to fight, and felt themselves aggrieved by the lack of attention they received from the enemy. Later in the afternoon I borrowed a horse and joined a reconnoitring party consisting of a squadron of regulars, a detachment of Circassians, and a number of officers. We trotted northward on the Nikopoli road for three miles, and saw a small body of Roumanian cavalry near Verbitza, who disappeared in the village on noticing us. The Circassians rode up to the houses, and were received with rifle-shots. On our return to camp we were told that our right wing had again been successfully engaged. The night passed without incident; we paid no heed to the occasional discharge of cannon in the south.

At daybreak on the 10th the cannonade was recommenced on both sides with great vigour. Impenetrable mist in the direction of Grivitza; moderately clear with us. Again we felt ourselves insulted at being ignored by the enemy. We heard that the infantry engagement at Krishin had been resumed, and that troops had been sent from the reserve to Yunuz Bey's assistance, viz. eight battalions under Emin Pasha, who was wounded next day. Later, Mehemed Nazif Bey was sent, with three battalions of the left wing (one each from Opanetz, Bukova, and Janik Bair redoubt east) towards Krishin; I presume the Mushir had come to the conclusion that the real assault would, after all, take place in the south. As a matter of fact, no attempt was made upon our left wing, except the Bash Tabiyas, and my redoubt did not receive a single shell during the battle.

About 3 p.m. a big flare startled us, and we saw that a stock of forage and some huts with stores established

in the rear of the Bash Tabiyas were blazing furiously. Almost at the same time the Turkish shells set fire to Radishevo, and the two conflagrations, visible from the summit of the Bair, and making a lurid smear in the heavy grey atmosphere, presented a grand spectacle, to which the now uninterrupted cannonade on all points, save our own flank, played a suitable accompaniment. The forage fire had soon burned itself out, but the village blazed throughout the night, and lighted up the south-east horizon in a superb and terrible manner. At 5 p.m. rain set in, which lasted until the 13th. In the evening we heard that in the south we had been successful; that our shells had caused an explosion of Russian ammunition waggons on the Pelishat road, and that one in Ibrahim Tabiya had killed and wounded thirty men, among the former Lieut.-Colonel Ibrahim Bey, the commander of that redoubt. The night passed under a spasmodic cannonade.

Thus ended the four days' bombardment by which the Russians had sought to prepare their attack. They had not gained their object. The redoubts were on the 11th in much the same condition as they had been on the 6th, the trifling damage done during the day having been repaired at night. Fresh works had actually been constructed: for instance, the trenches of Omer Tabiya. We had lost 500 men killed and wounded, including eighty disabled by explosions and 300 casualties during the infantry engagement on the right wing. The enemy's losses during the four days (*vide* Kuropatkin) were 2000. The Turkish soldiers, so far from being demoralised, simply laughed at the Russian batteries. That was the result of 30,000 shells.

Tuesday, September 11, the first day of the actual

battle, opened with a drizzling rain and in a white mist. The latter cleared towards noon; the rain continued all day, occasionally with a heavy downpour, mostly in a demoralising spray. The ground was a swamp; the wet penetrated our clothing; it invaded our sleeping-apartments and store-chambers, and precautions had to be taken to keep the ammunition dry.

The cannonade was furious for some hours; then, at nine, there was a lull; before midday it recommenced on all points; an hour later it lessened, and at 1.30 we heard rifle-fire in the south. I climbed our pole, and saw dense masses of Russian infantry on the western slope of the hill south of Grivitza. At 3 p.m. the Bash Tabiyas were hotly engaged. The colonel made a rearrangement of the troops in the trenches, so that eight companies (one battalion) were distributed in such a way as to man the redoubt and its system of ditches; the troops in the trench leading to the east redoubt were withdrawn, and this trench was occupied by the garrison of the other work. This left two battalions (mine and another) disengaged; these were formed in march columns behind the redoubt. An orderly from the Bash Tabiyas said that the Roumanians had attacked furiously, and had been repelled with terrific losses.

By four o'clock, the rain still coming down pitilessly and the mist having cleared a little, the action seemed general along the line, except with us, in Bukova, and in Opanetz. We could not see much, except through our glasses and from lofty positions; but we could *hear*. It sounded as if the universe were dissolving into its elements in a hurricane of thunder and eruptions. The heavy, moisture-laden air beat down the powder-smoke; lazily it curled along the ground in huge

white, vapoury balls, bringing its own aroma with it. We, condemned to idleness, whilst around us men were playing for their lives, sniffed the air, and cursed those who kept us there; the minutes dragged out into eternities; and every eye rested upon the entrance to the redoubt, whence the order to advance was to proceed.

The two battalions were drawn up in parallel march columns. Every detail had been attended to, for our major was an excellent officer in that respect.

At four Adil's aide-de-camp galloped up, and immediately the order was given to the other battalion to proceed to the Bash Tabiyas, where (so I heard) the Roumanians, now reinforced by a Russian division, were preparing a fresh attack.

Five minutes later a Circassian came *ventre à terre* from the direction of the Grivitza bridge, on the Bulgareni road; he was smoke-begrimed, and had ridden so hard that his horse broke down. Adil and his staff trotted up; a hurried conversation took place. Adil beckons to the major, who gallops up; a few words, and back comes our leader, rises in his stirrups, and sings out: "The battalion will proceed to Krishin with the utmost speed." In less than thirty seconds we are off. Adil and his officers draw their swords and wave a "good-bye."

Across sloppy meadows, ankle-deep in the slush, right towards the hotbed of the action, into the teeth of the cannonade whence proceed the vapours that greet and intoxicate us. Down comes the merciless rain, but we heed it not, for wetter than we are men cannot be.

The major was at the head, with the Circassian. Then came my company, I at its head, the colour squad

behind me. But our beloved standard hung limp and soaked on its pole. Next came the eight drummers, beating their instruments lustily, to give elasticity to our soil-clogged feet. The three other companies followed, the last having charge of some empty horse-carts.

The major beckoned to me, and said as I came up: "I am afraid we shall be beaten in the south. Do not tell the men, but inform your compatriot, and do your best, you two Englishmen."

I saluted and fell back, and told Jack, who squeezed my hand, and said: "We shall see their behinds again."

We proceeded by the way which I had tramped on the day of the second battle: down the southern slope of the Bair, across the Grivitza bridge, near which were posted a squadron of dismounted Ottoman Cossacks and a company of Chasseurs with two Whitworth guns; on the Bulgareni road westward, thence up the hill on which the great bayonet charge had taken place on July 30, and on which the centre redoubts now stood; then to headquarters' hill and past the Ikhtihat Tabiya, where we came in sight of the ten or twelve green tents which served as residences to the Mushir and his staff. Half a squadron of regulars stood here, dismounted, part of Osman's escort. The Circassian and the major left us, to advise the Mushir of our arrival, the latter being on the other (southern) slope of the hill. We had time to take breath, liberate our boots from the fetters of mud, and look around us.

The cannonade was terrific, and every few seconds there was heard on our right the peculiar rattle of company-volleys. Ikhtihat Tabiya was almost denuded of soldiers, except its artillery; beside the escort

squadron, two batteries which fired in the direction of Radishevo, and some Circassians, there were no troops on the hill, for every available man had been sent to the south.

We stood facing south. On our right, half a mile away, was the town, filling up a depression of the ground. On our left, beyond our own works, we could see the hill between Grivitza and Radishevo, with the dark lines of the enemy, two miles from us. At that time (4.30 to 5 p.m.) the attack on our centre had already collapsed. In front of Omer Tabiya the meadows and devastated maize fields were studded with dead and dying. This redoubt had been the object of the Russian attack, against which the enemy had hurled his columns five times. The Saloniki Regiment (whom I saw on the spot where the Radishevo road leaves Plevna) had charged brilliantly. This was the only cavalry charge of the Plevna campaign. Looking ahead, the hill which was crowned by the Tahir Tabiya limited our view.

We had waited hardly three minutes when the major returned and gave the order to advance. We faced half to the right, and having passed beyond the crest, came upon the Mushir and his staff of six or eight officers, dismounted, their horses being held by the detachment of regulars who attended them; twenty or thirty Circassians stood ready on their impatient, long-tailed, ugly little brutes, to serve as messengers.

Osman was dictating to a young aide-de-camp, all the time scanning the south with his glasses—the former standing, the latter sitting on a camp-stool. Beside them was a bearded, gaunt Circassian, waiting to be despatched; he looked out of proportion to his

small horse. A little in the rear was a rough shed, from which started three lines of wires : the telegraph office. As we passed the Mushir called to us to do our duty and the Prophet would help us. The men shouted, Lieutenant Azif seized the colours and waved them ; I raised my sword and joined lustily in the cheers. Osman always carried a pencil behind his ear, butt-end in front. This he grasped involuntarily —a habit of his : he would seize his pencil with an impetuous gesture in moments of danger or excitement, much as an armed man clutches his sword.

We turned again half to the right, down the slope of the hill, towards the houses. Here our track was crossed by a train of carts with wounded, wending their way to town painfully over the soft ground. There was confusion and a brief delay as the two processions crossed each other. To the left I perceived 100 men, singly or in small knots, who were wandering disconsolately about or trying to gain the shelter of the streets furtively—stragglers dispersed in the fights. The major had noticed them, and shouted to me to get them to join us. " Shoot them down if they refuse," cried he. I sang out to Jack and Sergeant Bakal ; we three left the ranks and went among the fugitives, imploring, exhorting, swearing, commanding. All the time Jack and I held out revolvers in the right hand, and Bakal had his rifle ready to give emphasis to his appeal. We collected thirty men ; the others stole away. I discharged my revolver, Jack followed ; but though we missed, it had the effect of bringing back another twenty. Meanwhile some lieutenants and sergeants had come up from the other companies, having perceived what we were about ; one of them shot a fugitive in the leg, and finally we had seventy

men, whom we brought back to the battalion. "In equal parts among the four companies" commanded the major. We made a rapid division; and each of my three squads had five or six of them, who began to feel ashamed of themselves.

Hardly had we completed our arrangements when the battalion started, the carts having meanwhile passed our track.

We gained the muddy streets. The panic-stricken inhabitants stood at their doors, the Turks anxious and trembling, the Bulgarians sullen and suspicious-looking, as if they comtemplated evil. Rifles were levelled at them as we passed; but the officers prevented slaughter. "They mean mischief," said some one, and events proved that he was right. The major hailed a Turkish civilian, who guided us. Some children distributed bread and cakes; there was a scramble for these, and I was glad when the stock was exhausted. The men, having had only biscuits since the morning, devoured the delicacies greedily. From the flat roofs women and children were watching the battle in the south, where Skobeleff and Yunuz Bey, a well-matched pair, had once more faced each other in an Iliad-like "battle of the gods." The major informed me that the wire between headquarters and the Krishin redoubts had been cut; that the Mushir was without news from Yunuz Bey and entertained grave fears of his safety; that the Plevna redoubts (Issa and Kavanlik Tabiyas) were threatened, if not already in the enemy's hands; that in that case the Krishin redoubts were cut off and the town itself endangered.

We turned northward by the main thoroughfare, passed a mosque where some hundreds of wounded prisoners were confined, guarded by convalescents

from the ambulances and armed labourers, and left town by the Ternina road, picking up many fugitives without stopping. As we approached the scene of conflict the thunder and the clatter became deafening. Thick clouds of smoke enveloped the landscape, held down by the heavy atmosphere and the drizzling rain. On our right were dripping vineyards, in which so many disbanded troops had taken shelter that the *embarras de richesses* prevented us from reclaiming any more. As it was, our battalion had already 200 strangers in its lines. Some more joined us voluntarily, and we learned that Kavanlik Tabiya was in the enemy's hands, and that twelve battalions, which had successively arrived from various parts, had been totally defeated and had disbanded. A corporal of Chasseurs told me this. I ran up to the major, and took the liberty to inform him that if we continued by the Ternina road we should come within 400 yards of Kavanlik Tabiya —which meant that we should have the enemy's fire in our left flank. The major had already heard the fatal news from some Circassians who had galloped forward to meet us. He seemed to have lost his equanimity.

" Emin wounded, a redoubt gone, twelve battalions disbanded, and only one fresh battalion—we can do no good ! " he exclaimed.

Meanwhile our column had come to a dead-stop. Seeing that the major was not so cool as he ought to have been, I suggested : " Let the men turn left, so as to face the enemy." This was done. As yet we had no losses, and had not received a shot ; but hardly had the change of front been made when a shell exploded among us. This brought the major to his senses. He gave these orders : " Last company in line

of skirmishers in front; two companies on the road to extend right and left; left flank to draw forward along the gardens; one company in rear in the vineyards "—all of which were executed promptly and in perfect order.

We were on the Ternina road, except the left flank, which had advanced 200 yards beyond it; thus we were facing almost due south; the front describing a quarter-circle open to the south. The extreme right was barely a quarter of a mile beyond the last houses of Plevna, the left touched the gardens of the town. The road leads along the crest of a gently rising hill in a south-westerly direction; on the summit, a mile and a half from Plevna, was Baghlarbashi Tabiya, the most northerly of the Krishin redoubts. Behind us were vineyards; in front of us, bare fields and patches of what had been cultivation, gently sloping away from us; below, between us and the Tultchenitza, half a mile from us, was Kavanlik, the redoubt which we now knew to be in Russian hands. But the atmosphere was so dense and the smoke so thick that we had only occasional glimpses of this work; the vapours hung heavily over the bottom of the little valley.

We had been but a minute in our positions—apparently unnoticed by the enemy, who, presumably, expected no attack from this side: for we received no rifle-fire, and beyond two more shells, which did no harm, no hostile attention was paid to us—when the company leaders were summoned to the major, whom we found in consultation with a lieutenant-colonel (Riza Bey) who had galloped up from Baghlarbashi on seeing us. What we learnt was, briefly, this—

Rifa'at Pasha, who had been sent to the scene of conflict early in the day, had now only four companies

of Chasseurs left; the rest of his troops (twelve battalions, viz. Emin's eight and four which he had brought with him) had disbanded after Kavanlik Tabiya had fallen. The Krishin redoubts were as yet in our hands; but Yunuz Tabiya, the most southerly of these, was so seriously endangered that Yunuz Bey had removed his guns. Issa Tabiya was as good as lost. Rifa'at was at that moment collecting a number of stragglers in Baghlarbashi, previous to undertaking an attack upon Kavanlik. We were to maintain our positions at any cost, so as to prevent the enemy from getting into Plevna, and on the sign being given from Baghlarbashi we were to attack Kavanlik from the north, Rifa'at and his detachment coming from the west. The four companies of Chasseurs would join our right flank.

"Shoot down any man who attempts to leave the ranks," said Riza.

The Chasseurs arrived whilst we were yet in consultation, and formed to our right, one company in line of skirmishers in advance, two in columns of companies on the road, one as reserve in rear, in the vineyards. Their major was with them; he joined Riza Bey, who took command of this one and a half battalion, upon which rested the fate of the battle and the hope of the army. We went back to our companies. One of the latter was in front, in a long, extended line; one was 100 yards to the rear, retained as reserve, among the vineyards; two (mine and another) occupied the space between the gardens of Plevna on the left and the Chasseurs on the right. I formed my company in two lines: Tereb's and Bakal's squads, with the colour squad, in front; Seymour's squad and a scratch detachment of fifty stragglers in second line. The

latter I placed under a strange lieutenant who had tried his best in the vineyards to collect fugitives, and had joined us with his men. The time must have been about 5.30. The roar of cannon and the clatter of rifle-fire came uninterruptedly from the directions of Krishin and Issa Tabiya, and rendered the conveyance of intelligence difficult.

Suddenly we saw the flashes of rifle-fire in the valley below us, where there was a heavy cloud of mist and smoke. Our skirmishers were firing steadily. The bullets began to whistle past me; several men of my company were struck down. Shells flew overhead into the vineyards. Riza Bey, who was close to me, had his glasses on Baghlarbashi. He shouted to the bugler nearest to him, who blew the advance. Our skirmishers fell back upon the main body; the column commenced to move. On my right I saw a deep trench, belonging to Kavanlik Tabiya, end on towards us; here the Russians had built up a wall of dead bodies across the entrance, and were firing over it. A terrific rifle-discharge greeted us, but on we went, giving a volley at every fifth or sixth step. The major of Chasseurs fell with his horse. We came within the cloud of mist and smoke, and saw Kavanlik Tabiya looming darkly ahead; in front were masses of Russian Chasseurs. The enemy's fire, claiming many victims, brought our lines first to a stop, then to a receding movement; a little later the bugles sounded the retreat. On my right I noticed our Chasseurs drawing away from us southward; I concluded (rightly) that they were making for Baghlarbashi, and that it would be wise to follow their example, to prevent the enemy, who had meanwhile commenced to advance, from dividing our line into two parts. Maintaining a steady fire we

drew slowly half backwards, half to the right, the Russians coming forward at the same rate of celerity, so that the distance between the two lines (200 yards) was maintained. This continued for two or three minutes, when once more the bugles sounded the advance. The order was given for the reserves to come forward. Riza Bey was in front of the line, my major beside him. As yet our troops were in perfect order and well in hand. We advanced at the double; the enemy hung back, and we came within 100 yards of the redoubt. But here a terrific volley made deep gaps in our lines: we began to slacken, to halt, to waver; first one man faced half-round, then another, then knots of three or four, and finally the whole column was drawn to the right; for instinctively we turned towards Baghlarbashi as our haven of refuge. When we were again 250 yards away from the redoubt Riza stopped, shouted, "Come back," and waved his sword to the retreating mass. The major joined him; then I did so, with Sergeant Bakal and a dozen men; Lieutenant Azif seized the colours from the already running corporal and came up to our group; twenty or thirty of our men and as many Chasseurs followed. I looked round for Jack with the unspoken question: "Why is he not here?" but he and his squad had disappeared. I saw them in the growing dusk drawing away to the left, towards the Ternina road.

There was no time for reflection. Our little group counted now a hundred and fifty men, who stood their ground for a minute or so and suffered severely. It seemed easier to advance than to remain to be annihilated. We went at a quick pace in the direction of the redoubt, much at haphazard: for it was growing darker with every minute. Suddenly we found

ourselves within fifteen paces of Russian skirmishers. I discharged my revolver. Then we heard the clatter of horses' hoofs; a Turkish bugle at some distance sounded "Prepare for cavalry"; hastily we formed three sides of a square. Fifty horsemen galloped up to us, they as much in uncertainty as to who we were as we were ignorant of their identity. It turned out to be Cossacks, and I had the gratification to unseat one ugly little devil. "It is no use, we must go back," said Riza Bey, gnashing his teeth. We faced towards Baghlarbashi. The Cossacks came close upon our heels as we retreated, and once more we had to turn. Our volleys dispersed them, but a few got to close quarters: I had to use my sword; a man beside me was run through by a lance. Just then a handful of Chasseurs, who had foreseen or guessed our predicament, came up; they fired into the darkness. Then a small body of Circassians joined us, and whilst they swarmed around to look for the Cossacks—whom they found eventually and exchanged shots and blows with —we effected our retreat to Baghlarbashi, where the majority of our men were already assembled. The redoubt itself was so crowded that we had to find shelter in the trenches. Our little scratch detachment had lost fifty men between the time when it had formed itself spontaneously around Riza Bey and Azif's standard and that of its gaining shelter.

It was now quite dark. The confusion was terrible. Men of five or six battalions were mixed indiscriminately. The redoubt itself was held by the battalion which had originally occupied it, and which was still in tolerably good condition. I helped my major to collect and reorganise his battalion—a difficult task in the darkness without artificial light, save the occasional striking of

a match. Some men lighted a fire ; but this was put out by the officers. A squad of the company which had served as reserve in the vineyard at the first assault, and the third squad of my company, had disappeared ; they had retreated in the opposite direction.

Rifa'at Pasha had undertaken his attack with half of the redoubt battalion and the remnants of four or five battalions, altogether 800 men ; he had been shot in the leg, and the soldiers had carried him back to the redoubt, in which the wounded Emin Pasha and several hundreds of disabled men already lay. Of my company I missed (besides the third squad) fifty men ; many of the stragglers incorporated in it before the charge had again gone astray, so that I had now only 100 men left. Tereb was shot in the arm ; it was only a flesh wound, but bled profusely. Azif and the colours were safe. Sergeant Bakal was bleeding in the cheek ; a bullet had grazed him, but he disdained to pay attention to the wound. The strange lieutenant was missing ; I ascertained later that he had been killed. Including the absent squads my battalion was minus 250 men ; but half of this number turned up afterwards.

To get order and discipline into this chaos of beaten and disheartened men, all soaked to the skin and nearly famishing, was a herculean task. Finally we succeeded, and my battalion occupied, two hours after the attack, one of the trenches in a tolerably solid and disciplined body. The stragglers were formed into scratch companies and placed under officers who had lost their troops ; these and the remnants of the four companies of Chasseurs occupied the other trenches ; the battalion attached to the redoubt was in it.

Meanwhile Riza Bey had sent a body of Circassians

forward on the Ternina road to Plevna. They came back with the grave news that the road and the vineyards beyond were occupied by the enemy; thus the Krishin redoubts were cut off from the town and the main body of the army, for in the Tultchenitza Valley also the Russians had firmly lodged themselves. We found out that Issa Tabiya had been taken a little while after we had made our attack upon Kavanlik. Major Issa, its builder and commander, was wounded, and died a few days later, ten minutes after having received promotion.

These disastrous discoveries were communicated to the commanders of the other three redoubts. During the night both Riza Bey and Yunuz Bey sent to the Mushir mounted messengers, who made a long *détour* and took four to five hours over the journey, the distance between Yunuz Tabiya and headquarters hill in a straight line being three miles.

It is difficult to ascertain the strength of, and the losses sustained by, the attacking force in the abortive attempt to recover Kavanlik Tabiya which I have described. We were minus a third of our men; but it is safe to assume that half of these were stragglers. Judging from the number of wounded who were brought into Baghlarbashi during the night and in the early morning, or who crawled up by themselves, and from the dead whom we saw lying about next day, I estimate the strength at 2000 and the loss at 300.

Twenty-one Turkish battalions had fought on this flank on the 11th. Deducting seven battalions, the original garrisons of the six redoubts, leaves fourteen taken from other parts, viz. one from Tahir Tabiya, nine from the reserves, four from the left wing.

The rifle-fire had ceased, the cannonade grew more

spasmodic; for the day the slaughter seemed to be over. During the night a shot every fifteen minutes was fired on either side.

Although order had been somewhat restored we were still in a fever-heat of excitement. There was so much to be done that rest seemed out of the question. Humanity compelled us to pick up the wounded, at least those whom we could reach. The night was very dark. Men were sent with the few lanterns that were handy, and before morning 100 had been brought in, among them many Russians. There were three surgeons in the redoubt, including our own, who had accompanied the battalion; these did their best with almost every necessary deficient. I saw them at work, with bare arms and blood-stained hands, soaked to the skin, faces streaming with the sweat of indescribably hard work; they looked, with their saws and knives, like the torturers of the Inquisition. Shirts served as bandages. Volunteers assisted; but hardened men turned sick at some of the sights: halves of faces carried away, exposing the core of life's machinery; limbs torn off; bowels hanging out; pools of blood in which swam brain-remnants and intestines like living worms; amputated legs and arms thrust into corners. The damaged earthworks had to be repaired. The stock of ammunition still remaining in the redoubt (thirty cartridges per man) was dealt out. Biscuits were distributed. Water ran short, for the enemy held the springs in the vineyards. Many drank the muddy pool-water, mixed with blood, which had collected in the trenches; this caused vomiting, followed by thirst even greater than before; the drinking of ground-water was therefore prohibited. Unhappily, there was in Baghlarbashi no system of draining the works and

utilising the rain, such as we had in the Janik Bair redoubts. Sentries and outposts were placed around the work; the former were relieved every half-hour, as the men fell down with exhaustion. The troops were kept awake by frequent inspections and roll-calls; men who could recite were asked to do so; patriotic and martial poems were much in demand, and proved efficacious. But it seemed ludicrous to hear one young fellow spout sentimentally of the nightingale's love for the rose, and of the moonbeams kissing open the lily's closed chalice.

Riza Bey now commanded the redoubt, the original commander, Major Rassim, having been disabled, and his dispositions were energetic, capable, and effective.

At ten rifle-fire and shouts were heard north-west of Kavanlik; some of our companies turned out, and I brought mine out in tolerably good order for attack; but the Baghlarbashi bugles sounded "retreat" and the fight was over before we had tramped a hundred steps.

I had an hour's sleep, in ten-minute snatches, on the wet ground. I had to see to the outposts, the distribution of cartridges and biscuits, the dealing out of water in spoonfuls, loaded revolver in hand—in which labours the lion's share was borne by Bakal, indefatigable though wounded. The most arduous task was to keep the men awake, and uphold their spirits by praising, blaming, praying, cursing, exhorting, imploring, commanding, joking—whichever mode seemed appropriate or efficacious.

Such a night of terrors I shall never forget: cut off from the main army, in wet clothes, with no water, hardly any food, the soaked soil of a ditch as a couch, and the drizzling sky as a roof; defeated, with no

prospect of recovering our positions; surrounded by fields covered with dead and dying, the latter moaning pitifully throughout those hours of unspeakable horrors!

The most heated fancy cannot realise the sufferings of the wounded, many of whom were left for twelve hours on the spot where they had fallen before receiving first-aid. Hundreds must have bled to death or succumbed to thirst and tortures. Picture to yourself the thoughts of such a man, if he were conscious—some one's father, husband, or sweetheart: his awful loneliness; unable to move; maimed, bleeding, rent by physical pain, frantic with thirst, in a silent field of dead bodies staring with vacant eyes up to the cruel firmament; now and then the faint groan of a fellow-sufferer or an agonising appeal to the pitiless heavens—thousands of living men near, and not one able or allowed to help. He is not conscious of having done any wrong to deserve such terrible punishment—all the horrors of the night that will never end because two emperors have fallen out!

Throughout the hours of darkness the Russians fired every few minutes a volley from the Plevna redoubts, to prevent a surprise attack. Some of our men went with pails and cooking-vessels to a brook which flowed past the southern face of these works (it may have been a natural rain-gutter); having crept stealthily to the bank, they came within reach of a volley, and only one returned, but he with two full buckets. A second party came back in dismay without having reached their destination. After that water expeditions were forbidden. Some Chasseurs went, nevertheless; they met a body of Russians similarly engaged; the two detachments concluded by signs

an armistice, and filled their cans and buckets without molesting each other. When this became known other water-parties organised themselves; but just then Kavanlik gave a terrific volley, and the men abandoned the expedition. I had to prevent some of mine from going by main force. Riza gave orders that no man should leave the trenches under penalty of death.

At midnight there was a huge flare in the south of Plevna, which lighted the country for miles around, and showed us the triangular-shaped field, 1400 yards long, bordered on both sides by vine-overgrown slopes, between us and Kavanlik. It was covered with dead and dying. The conflagration, burning with terrific fury in one tall column of flame, reflected in the numberless pools of rain-water, on the black, slippery ground, the silent dark lines denoting slaughtered fellow-creatures; the occasional flashes of discharging cannon, the long-drawn-out lightning of musketry volleys at regular intervals, made a spectacle of awful grandeur. Superstitious men thought that God was destroying this globe for its iniquity.

The fire did not burn long. We learnt next day that a store of forage had been set alight by the Christians of Plevna, who thus thanked Osman and his army for the humane treatment they had received.

Wednesday, September 12, opened with an iron-grey, lustreless dawn. A cold wind, like the chill of death, swept over the fields, with their silent or faintly moaning victims of yesterday's slaughter. The rain had ceased, but the uniform grey sky gave promise of another wet day, a promise which it fulfilled faithfully, for after an hour's interruption the rain recommenced and continued till late at night. The ground was a

morass. From Plevna a column of smoke mounted upwards, and was spread by the wind over the battle-field like a hideous canopy, blending with the damp vapours exhaled by the soil as the temperature rose. The men shivered in their wet clothes. Biscuits were nibbled for breakfast; those who were lucky enough to possess water shared it with famishing comrades. Notwithstanding orders, many lay down on their stomachs and lapped up the pool-slush, whilst near them corpses were lying in a compound of blood and mud.

In the early morning this order was read out in Baghlarbashi: "A message has been received from the Mushir saying that during the forenoon fifteen to twenty fresh battalions will undertake an attack upon the lost redoubts. With God's help we shall recover our positions and win the battle. At every point save this the Russians have been defeated, and have suffered heavily. The redoubts near Krishin are unconquered, and the troops there are in excellent spirits."

The order was conveniently silent as to the loss of Kanli Tabiya; but of course we were then in blissful ignorance of this mishap—in fact, I did not know of it until past noon.

"Whence is the Mushir to get the fresh battalions?" asked the officers in whispers. "There are none left, and no reinforcements can have arrived, for the Russian cavalry holds the Orkanyé road."

It became known among the officers that in the Krishin redoubts artillery ammunition was running short, that there were no more than six shots per gun left.

In the early morning we got numbers of wounded into the redoubt; on their side the Russians were similarly occupied, and the opposing forces abstained

from firing upon the men engaged in this humane pursuit.

From our redoubt we could plainly see Kavanlik Tabiya, which was half a mile away and below our level. It was crowded with soldiers. We counted eight guns, which commenced to shell us without doing much injury. The trenches in front were occupied by skirmishers. Looking north-west, towards Plevna, we had before us the fields of yesterday's conflict; on the left the orchards came close up to the redoubt; to the right was a cultivated patch 400 yards wide, sloping gently, and bordered by vineyards; behind us, half a mile south, on our own level (which was the crest of a hill), were Talahat and Milas Tabiyas; Yunuz Tabiya was hidden from us by the accidents of the ground. Every meadow or open space within our line of sight contained dead men; the gardens and vineyards conveniently hid their horrors. Except that beyond Plevna (which was 200 feet below us) we could see the western crest of the Janik Bair, the view was extremely limited.

The following is a *résumé* of the opposing forces which fought on this spot on the 12th and decided the battle:—

Turks: 21 battalions and 2 squadrons, say 9000 men, and 10 guns.

Russians: 22 battalions and 12 squadrons, say 13,000 men, and 90 guns.

Of the seven battalions which the Mushir sent as reinforcements to the right wing on the 12th, three came from Tahir Tabiya and the centre, and four from the left wing.

At 6 a.m. (heavy rain, but atmosphere clear) Tahir Pasha, with Colonel Hairi Bey, a few junior officers,

mounted, and half a squadron of Saloniki men, arrived in Baghlarbashi, having come by the Ternina road, which was now free from enemies, but within rifle-range of Kavanlik. Tahir, by the Mushir's orders, took command of the attack, Hairi being his second. My major was called to the redoubt; on his return I learnt that five fresh, or nearly fresh, battalions had been sent by the Mushir, and were forming in the vine-yards west of Plevna under Lieut.-Colonel Abdullah Bey. The sign was to be an artillery volley from head-quarters hill, where the battery had been shifted to the south-western slope, so as to be visible from Bagh-larbashi. From this redoubt there took part in the attack my battalion, four companies of Chasseurs, and the Baghlarbashi battalion proper, whilst the duty of holding the works during our absence devolved upon a few scratch companies of collected stragglers and some dismounted Circassians. We formed quietly in the trenches, my battalion on the right (one company skirmishers; two—among them mine—in the fighting line, one in rear), with a scratch detachment of regulars, Circassians, and Salonikis on our right flank; centre, six companies of the Baghlarbashi battalion; left, two companies of Chasseurs; two of the former and two of the latter, as reserves, 200 yards in rear. The left flank was to get into touch with the right flank of Abdullah Bey's five battalions, and was extended accordingly.

The total of the troops taking part in the abortive attack on Kavanlik and Issa on the morning of September 12, was 11½ battalions and 1 squadron, say 5000 men.

At 6.30 a heavy, concentrated artillery-fire was suddenly directed upon Baghlarbashi. The redoubt

being now almost denuded of troops, the shells did no harm, except to the soil; but several exploded in the trenches, one of which killed two men of my company.

I had arranged my company thus—

Right: first squad (Lieutenant Tereb, who insisted on coming in spite of his wound), forty men, two deep; right flank to keep in touch with cavalry.

Centre: colour squad (Lieutenant Azif), increased by stragglers to twenty-five men, four deep.

Left: second squad (Sergeant Bakal), forty men, two deep; left flank to keep in touch with the other line company of my battalion.

In second line: a scratch squad of fifty men, in single line, under Sergeant Tütünjü (a stranger), fifty yards in rear of front line. (That was not his name; it is a nickname—the word means tobacconist—bestowed on him by my men, by reason of his having a large quantity of—probably stolen—cigarettes and tobacco in his possession.)

One hundred yards in advance of my front line was a squad of the skirmishing company of my battalion.

At 7.30 look-out man on top of priest's ladder in Baghlarbashi fires rifle as a sign that headquarters battery has commenced to shell. We leave trench and make in a straight line for Kavanlik. Many stumble on the slippery ground: grass-plots like ice, bare soil the consistency of syrup. A deluge comes down. Dead bodies impede progress; sometimes we have to jump over mounds of corpses. One poor fellow, a Russian, who has been lying with shattered feet for fifteen hours on the spot, catches hold of my leg; I shake him off, and a man finishes him with the bayonet. The rest of the assault is blurred in my recollection;

I remember but the main features: rifle-fire from Kavanlik trenches—guns discharge at point-blank range—gaps in my line—bugles sound "Charge"—bayonets fixed—our skirmishers fall back and mix with main body—we are now in front line—troops get into confusion as space becomes narrower—we get cramped, with 5000 men coming from all sides towards a common centre—we enter one trench which Russian skirmishers have meanwhile abandoned—another, where Russians make stand—close quarters—bayonet fight; I have to use sword and revolver—Russians retreat, turn, run to third trench, we close upon their heels—brief encounter in last trench, which we take—fire from Kavanlik, now only 100 yards away. I get a glimpse of the houses in the south-western corner of Plevna, where Turkish inhabitants are crowding on the flat roofs, waving multi-coloured rags. We leave third trench, but lines falter under the awful fire from redoubt. We retreat to trench, where we come to a dead stop. The impetus of the assault having been broken, I fear the attack has collapsed. Men lie down and fire from trench, from behind corpses, or any shelter they can get—finally whole line, as far as I can see, flat on the ground, firing. In this position ten minutes. Hearing again shouts and drums, I make a fresh attempt, with Tereb, Azif, Bakal, the corporal carrying the colours, and twenty-five men. I get Tütünjü's squad to come forward. Bakal and I lift the men from the ground by main force, and give several who will not get up vigorous heel-kicks in fleshy parts. At length I have 100 men, a goodly number of them strangers. We proceed thirty yards—many are down—line falters; we find ourselves isolated, turn, come back at a trot upon the rest, who

all face round, mistaking our intention. Din so terrible that commands become useless—powder-smoke, kept down by the rain, limits view to a radius of barely fifty yards—my bugler is on the ground. Only in the most advanced trench I succeed in stopping the backward movement. Our right flank exposed, as cavalry has disappeared. I order Tütünjü's squad to turn about to the right *en potence* to prevent Russian counter-attack from this side—major gallops up, and gives command to prepare for fresh attack—in the trench and under the shelter of the smoke I reorganise company and get it into tolerable order. The whole line advances again; but hardly have we reached nearest trench when bugles on the left unexpectedly sound "Retreat." Although the attack promises well, and the men are eager to proceed, we cannot but obey. We scamper back, and soon find ourselves, breathless, in the trenches of Baghlarbashi.

It took me half an hour to find my men and reorganise the company, which had lost twenty in killed, wounded, and missing. We occupied our old trench. My personal friends were safe. I had not a scratch. The bugler and some slightly wounded men crawled up later, the former more concerned about a gaping hole in his instrument than about that in his shoulder. The colours were completely riddled; the tailor of my company had to sew the rags together. My battalion was minus fifty men. I estimated the loss to the attacking force at 500. Abdullah's five battalions had retreated to the vineyards.

At nine the disorder caused by the collapse of our attack had been overcome, thanks to the efforts of Tahir, Hairi, Riza, my major, and the company leaders. We were ready for a fresh attempt; but none was

undertaken, owing probably to the scarcity of ammunition; some men had run out of cartridges; none of my company had more than twenty-five left. I made a re-distribution, so that each man had fifteen cartridges.

Tahir Pasha's order to retreat at a moment when the charge was at its height and showed as yet no signs of collapse, so far as Abdullah's five battalions were concerned, was for many days the subject that exercised our minds and gave rise to heated discussion. It became known that Tahir was in disgrace, and report spoke of a contemplated court-martial. Evidently he vindicated his character, for he retained the post of Chief-of-Staff to the end.

At a later date I learnt Tahir's motive. That the Russian-Roumanian cavalry had taken possession of the western approaches to Plevna was, already during the battle, an open secret among the officers. Tahir's scouts reported having seen cavalry and horse-artillery in large numbers at Dolna Dubnik, on the move towards the Vid. Above Ternina there was a ford, and at Disevitza a partly destroyed bridge, which skilled engineers could have roughly and quickly repaired. The inference is obvious: Tahir feared to be taken between two fires, and probably lost his head. He sent a mounted messenger to Osman, informing him of his conviction that it was impossible to recover the lost redoubts—that a fresh attempt would involve the army in ruin. Osman was furious. He despatched an orderly, calling Tahir back, and depriving him of his command. A council was held, in which all officers who were within reach took part. It was decided to make one more attempt with the last available battalions; should it fail, the army was

to abandon the Plevna position, force the road to Orkanyé, at present held only by cavalry, and retreat thither. Colonel Tewfik Bey was given the command, and two fresh battalions—the last resource—were added to the force already assembled on the spot.

10 a.m.: I receive orders to send a party to the redoubt for ammunition, a number of packhorses, despatched by the Mushir, having arrived by way of the vineyards. There was enough to give each man in Baghlarbashi his complement of eighty cartridges.

10.30 a.m.: Sudden violent artillery-fire from Milas and Talahat Tabiyas, whose six guns (including the three removed from Yunuz Tabiya) had hitherto discharged only at rare intervals. The reason of this was the arrival of ammunition carts sent by the Mushir. I was told that the difficulties which the convoy had encountered in the almost pathless vineyards, owing to the condition of the soil, had been indescribable; only to the superhuman exertions of the escort (Saloniki men), a party of engineers, and the drivers, assisted by civilians, it was due that the carts reached their destination.

11 a.m.: Baghlarbashi again the centre of concentrated Russian artillery-fire. We have to extend the lines in open order, so as to diminish casualties. My company lost three men.

11.30 a.m.: Russian column with twenty three-horse carts (which we know to contain infantry ammunition) appears on the Krishin-Plevna road, *en route* for Kavanlik. The four companies Chasseurs are sent forward into the vineyards and compel column to turn back, causing heavy loss; the guns of Milas and Talahat Tabiyas contribute to this. Two fresh attempts made by the Russians between noon and

3 p.m. to get their ammunition into Kavanlik have the same result.

Every Russian showing himself in and near Kavanlik was hailed with rifle-fire from the Baghlarbashi trenches; sometimes a hundred shots were hurled at a single man. Water-parties were annihilated. The excitement was like that of the chase; shouts of delight greeted the fall of each man. We had meanwhile obtained water from the wells in the vineyards.

2 p.m.: Explosion of ammunition in Kavanlik, at which the Turks give a cheer.

2.30 p.m.: We form again for attack in the trenches. Arrangement the same as before, except that Abdullah has two more battalions—those sent by the Mushir, which have meanwhile arrived in the vineyards. Total of attacking force: Thirteen and a half battalions and two squadrons, say 5500 men.

3 p.m.: A hail of shells is directed on Kavanlik from Milas, Talahat, Tahir, Omer Tabiyas, and headquarters. Sharp rain, light wind; atmosphere now clear, and view good.

3.10 p.m.: Rifle-fire north of Kavanlik; the attack has commenced on that side. We are instructed to keep quiet, so as to deceive the enemy.

3.15 p.m.: Troops (Abdullah's seven battalions) emerge from the vineyards, preceded by skirmishers.

3.20 p.m.: Our bugles sound "Advance." We leave trenches and make in a straight line for Kavanlik, at a moderate pace, so as to give our skirmishers time to fire.

This time our advance is executed with perfect order and steadiness. There are no receding movements, only two short halts, when all save officers lie down and fire from behind the corpses' friendly shelter.

We arrive at the first trench, deserted by the enemy, where we settle, and whence we deliver quickfire. The Russians' fire against us is weak; the majority of their forces is directed against Abdullah's battalions. We start after a few minutes' breathing time, and occupy second trench. Again the roofs are crowded with enthusiastic compatriots. I order "Cease firing," so as to give the powder-smoke time to clear away; when the view is unimpaired we see the Turks in the north-west climbing the parapet of the redoubt. There is now no holding the men: they rush for the scene of conflict as fast as their legs will carry them. Smart encounter in the last trench with few remaining Russians, who succumb to our bayonets. We scale the parapet, and see the Turks in occupation of the redoubt. The Russians have made their way out by the south-east corner, whence they gain the Krishin road and the vineyards. Troops wildly enthusiastic, and eager for further fighting. I am just in time to stop some men butchering wounded. One who will not obey will bear the scar of the sword-cut I gave him across the face to the end of his days. A grateful look in the eyes of the maimed opponent is my reward. We find our own two guns and three of the enemy's; three the Russians have taken with them, dragging them out by hand. The confusion in the redoubt is indescribable: the slaughter has been terrible; the place looks like the shambles; the soil is a quagmire, of which blood is the predominating liquid element; even the terrific deluge which Heaven is sending cannot efface the ponds and rivers of blood. Four companies start without orders for Issa, which is meanwhile attacked by three battalions under Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey, stationed on the

southern margin of Plevna. Seeing this, other troops follow; I join these with my company, but the major and three companies of my battalion remain behind in Kavanlik. I learnt later that Tewfik Bey had stopped them, seeing the Russians already evacuating Issa Tabiya. When we (that is, my company and five or six others belonging to as many battalions) arrive in Issa Tabiya, the four companies which have started in the first instance and some of Mehemed Nazif's force are already in possession, having taken the redoubt without having come to close quarters. But now Cossacks trot forward to cover the retreat of the infantry; a few squadrons of regular cavalry and Salonikis, wisely stationed by Mehemed Nazif on the spot where the Krishin road enters Plevna, and retained in view of this emergency, gallop up. There is a smart encounter; several companies follow the Turkish horsemen; the Cossacks turn back, and disappear in the direction of the Lovdcha road.

The Russians retreated along the Krishin road and through the vineyards; half a mile south of Issa they turned to the left and gained the Lovdcha road, along which they proceeded to Brestovitz; here they bivouacked for the night.

My company lost only three men in the second assault, my battalion fifteen. The total loss to the attacking force was 300. Riza Bey had been wounded.

By five all is over, and the third and greatest battle of Plevna has ended, for the Russians, in a total failure. For six weeks they have prepared for the storming; they have hurled every available man against Osman's stronghold; they have ushered in the attack by four days' shelling of unprecedented violence; they have

called together their most accredited leaders; their Czar, their Commander-in-Chief (Grand Duke Nicholas), the Prince of Roumania, and many diplomatic, political, and military grandees have inspired the troops by their presence—and all they have gained in exchange for the sacrifice of 20,000 men is one small redoubt, of no tactical value, the possession of which did them subsequently more harm than good. And this one dubious success is due principally to the Roumanians, a fact which must have been a galling reflection to the Russian commanders.

These are the broad features of the battle—

The enemy had attacked the Turkish lines at three points: his right wing (Ninth Corps and three Roumanian divisions; General Krüdener), Kanli Tabiya in the north-east; his centre (Fourth Corps; General Krylow), Omer Tabiya in the south-east; his left wing (detachment of General Skobeleff), the Krishin redoubts in the south-west. The attack had been fixed for 8 p.m. on the 11th, but in the centre two regiments started two hours too early.

Kanli Tabiya had successfully withstood three onslaughts; the fourth, at 7 p.m. on the 11th, succeeded. Various attempts were made during the 12th to recover the lost redoubt, one in the evening, on a large scale; but they collapsed, and finally we left the enemy in possession of this point.

The centre attack had failed as thoroughly as attack can fail.

In the south, Skobeleff's impetuosity, science, personal bravery, and astounding, almost uncanny, influence over the men had been of no avail against the Krishin redoubts. He pushed forward and took the Plevna works, thus driving the acute angle of a

triangular-shaped wedge into the Turkish position, dividing it into two disconnected parts. He was dislodged on the 12th.

During the battle the Russian-Roumanian cavalry (a total of 60 squadrons with 36 light guns) had taken possession of the Orkanyé road, which they held up to September 24, when the road was forced by Ahmed Hifzi's column.

On the 13th and 14th the Russians retreated behind Radishevo in the centre, to Bogot on the south, whilst the right wing retained Kanli Tabiya, and was thus within 300 yards of the Turkish lines.

The Turks had lost 5000 killed and *hors de combat.* The Russian-Roumanian losses are variously stated ; I have seen estimates as high as 25,000, as low as 16,000. I presume the truth lies between the two extremes, say 20,000 (15,000 Russians and 5000 Roumanians) in killed and wounded, of which, roughly, 5000 in the (Russian) right wing, 6000 in the centre, 8000 in Skobeleff's detachment (out of 20,000, or 40 per cent.), and 1000 in artillery, cavalry, and reserves. We had taken 2000 wounded and a few hundred unwounded prisoners. Four hundred of our men were, and remained, missing. There were 7000 corpses on the battle-field. The total loss was thus at least 25,000, or one-fifth of the force engaged. The Russian *loss* amounted to two-thirds of the Turkish *force*, an occurrence without precedent. We had lost two guns in Kanli Tabiya and won three in Kavanlik.

It is difficult to mention men who distinguished themselves without running the risk of omitting equally deserving names. The hero of the 12th was, undoubtedly, Tewfik Bey, the leader of the attack which decided the battle and crowned the tottering banner

of the Crescent once more with the laurels of victory. He was promoted to brigadier's rank, and was ever afterwards popular with the troops.

But without wishing to detract from the credit due to Tewfik, in my opinion the greatest hero of all during those awful days was Colonel Yunuz Bey, commander of the Krishin redoubts. Baghlarbashi was taken out of his hands early, on account of the distance which divided this work from the others ; Milas, Talahat, and Yunuz Tabiyas he held for six days, with seven battalions and six guns, against a Skobeleff with twenty battalions and ninety guns.

The names of Tewfik and Yunuz were mentioned in a general order read out during parade two or three days after the battle.

The excitement of the troops when they knew themselves to be victors was indescribable. Men embraced, wept, danced about like maniacs with delight, knelt down in whole companies to offer up heartfelt prayers of gratitude to Him who alone gives victory. I saw one poor fellow, doubled up, with abdomen torn open, turn round as he writhed on the ground, and assume painfully the orthodox attitude for devotion. He died in this posture, proudly conscious that Heaven's gates had opened wide for him.

Indomitable in his resolution, unshaken in his moral strength, unfaltering in carrying out his purport, Osman, by this victory, has left a brilliant mark upon the century's history. When despair was blackest the divine light of hope burnt still within him—that light which, in the breast of a brave man, only death can extinguish. He refused to be beaten ; boldly he staked his last battalion, and won the game. In contrast to the petty heart-burnings and littlenesses of

the Russian leaders (Skobeleff excepted) he stands out giantlike in his moral grandeur.

From people living in England, France, and Germany in 1877, and from journals consulted, I have learnt that public excitement in Europe was intense. Men could hardly believe that a handful of Turks should have beaten the mighty Russian hordes; a new star had arisen on the horizon of history, and Osman's name was in everybody's mouth. In England especially he was considered the man of the hour, and if he had visited this island in 1878, such a reception would have been given to him as would have made a Blücher stare.

My company had lost twenty-five in killed and disabled; but this I only ascertained later, and on the evening of the 12th sixty men were missing, not counting Lieutenant Seymour's squad. Half of the men I had in my ranks were strangers. The losses of the battalion in dead and wounded amounted to eighty. Tereb, exhausted from loss of blood, went to an ambulance, where he stayed a week; Bakal recovered without surgical aid. Azif and myself were unwounded.

Our adjutant had recovered from the wound received on July 20, and had rejoined us in the beginning of September. To everybody's satisfaction he was with us only a few days, being transferred to another battalion which had lost both major and major's adjutant. He was again wounded on the 11th, but not badly.

Our sergeant-major had stayed in the Janik Bair redoubt when we started for the south on the 11th, ostensibly to attend to the ammunition-supply, in reality from motives of fear. A shell killed him as he

was on his way from the redoubt to the magazine of another redoubt. "Good riddance," said we. Bakal was promoted to bash chawush rank. He continued, however, to remain in my company as leader of my former squad, on account of the scarcity of officers—for which providential occurrence I was grateful. Thus this wonderful man fulfilled three functions—only surviving sergeant to the company, sergeant-major to the battalion, acting lieutenant to a squad—not only well, but apparently without an effort.

Our major had hurt his ankle in the last charge, when his horse had been shot under him. He recovered without ambulance aid.

The battle was over, but so much remained to be done that refreshment and rest seemed to be ages distant. To the credit of the Turks be it said that their first care was for the wounded. They did not get drunk, as the Russians do when they have been victorious, but set to work with as much method as the confusion would allow to collect and attend to the victims. We had no time to think of the dead; as a matter of fact, corpses were still unburied a week after the battle, when the sight of vultures and carrion crows disputing the possession of rotting humanity with the vagrant dogs would have made an emperor have pangs of remorse.

The fields around Kavanlik, Issa, and Baghlarbashi Tabiyas presented an aspect never to be forgotten. The slush was pink; the meadows were covered with dead and dying, in many places piled up in grotesque heaps. In Issa parapets had been built with dead men.

Those who gave signs of life, friend and foe alike, were got into the redoubt with all possible speed;

when first-aid had been given and the bleeding stopped they were conveyed into Plevna, mostly carried by hand, as vehicular accommodation was not one-tenth of what would have been sufficient. (We had at that time 1500 carts in Plevna camp, but with so extended a battlefield even this number was totally insufficient.) Half of my company assisted in this work. Of the rest I formed a cooking-party, there being a store of maize and rice in the redoubt; an outpost in the vineyards, to acquaint us of any attempted return on the enemy's part; a gang for conveying water to the redoubt; and a party for helping to repair the damaged works. Fatigue had vanished; the glorious sensation of victory neutralised exhaustion.

Being separated from my major and my battalion, I was left without instructions, and acted on my own responsibility.

When, at eight, the various parties and gangs had returned from their labours, I held muster, weeded out strangers (save those belonging to Adil's division, which we took with us when we marched back to the Janik Bair redoubt), and placed these under Lieutenant Azif, instructing him to deliver them to their respective redoubts. This was done from reasons of humanity: it saved the men from being accused of cowardice or desertion. With the rest of my company I sat down to a meal of rice and porridge. The rain had ceased, but the night was very dark; large bonfires burnt in the redoubt. As the following four days were moderately fine, it seemed as if heaven had reserved its deluge for the battle. On the 16th rain set in with renewed vigour, and lasted with rare interruptions for a month.

I ought to have returned to Kavanlik and rejoined

my battalion; but I thought that we should fare better if I remained independent.

The confusion in Issa Tabiya baffles description: it took three hours to get order into this seething mass of men belonging to six or eight battalions. There was not a whole battalion in the place, and few entire companies. The temporary commander appointed by Tewfik (I think it was Hairi Bey) worked strenuously. He left me alone, and I received not a single order from him; perhaps, as I flattered myself was probably the case, he had been told that I could be relied upon to attend to my business; but let the reader put this down to my youthful conceit.

At nine, when we had finished eating and drinking, and had dried ourselves by the fire, I asked a superior officer for instructions, and received orders to start immediately for the Janik Bair, the left wing being dangerously undermanned, and the right so crowded as to render order and discipline well-nigh impossible, comfort wholly so. I assembled the sad remnants of my company. The men looked like vagabonds, dirty beyond recognition, encased from head to foot in crusts of dried mud, many in tatters which would barely hold together. Numbers had "borrowed" boots, trousers, jackets from corpses. Exclusive of twenty strangers whom we took with us, I had fifty men left; but Seymour's squad we encountered later, and forty men came into our redoubt next day, most of them having either certificates or witnesses to prove that they had fought elsewhere. The average strength of the company during September was 120.

We marched through Plevna. Some shells had struck the place but the damage was trifling. The

town presented an aspect which is beyond my descriptive powers.

The streets are streets no longer, but brooks and rivers; where there is a remnant of terra firma (save the mark!) it has the consistency of butter. Each tree sends down insolent little showers of its own when the wind moves it; from the roofs thin waterspouts innumerable drench us, who have just dried ourselves, and make me utter impious words. The block at the street-corners has been recalled to me by the scene in the thoroughfares of the City of London on busy week-day mornings, minus the police. Strings of carts with groaning men—of whom many are disfigured by dirt, blood, wounds, beyond the semblance of humanity, who are piled liked butchers' carcases upon reeking and steaming straw—are crossed by other trains of vehicles with similar cargoes; huge fires at important crossings dispel the blackness of a particularly dark night by vacillating patches of yellow brilliancy, with flickering shadows chasing each other like ghosts along the house-fronts, making the trees appear as if animated by goblins. The uncertain light of the flames adds to the fierceness of tawny Tartar countenances, sets hideous demons at work on the stolid surface of Muscovite physiognomies, suggests grotesque changes of features, turning sound men to devils, and sick men, sometimes to angels, sometimes to the brute creations of a delirium-heated brain. What a babel of tongues! —men praying, lamenting, cursing in Russian, Roumanian, Turkish, Arabic, Circassian; drivers loudly clamouring for a passage, inquiring their way or destination, exchanging abuse and blows with those who obstruct their progress; snatches of Bulgarian, French, unknown dialects; the guttural tones of a German

surgeon who swears at himself, as he vainly tries to get order into this chaos; the shrill notes of an English doctor, who apostrophises, to a colleague across the road, that fool of a driver who has brought him corpses instead of wounded men. Before every ambulance a queue of carts is waiting to unload; a fire to light the ghastly labours; a banner, with red Crescent, limp and wet on its pole; a perspiring, overworked, dead-beat superintendent or surgeon refuses to take in any more stock for his thriving trade. Here is a crowd of jubilant Turkish, there a group of crestfallen and trembling Bulgarian, inhabitants. What a change for the latter—yesterday insolent and triumphant, to-day in the deepest abyss of ignominious fear! Detachments come from all sides, on the way back to their redoubts; two or three squadrons of cavalry trot westward to assist the Vid bridge guard; a battery gallops to some suddenly discovered exposed point. The guns splash us from head to foot; on the soft clay the usual thunder of the wheels is strangely absent, so that they pass us well-nigh in silence, looking like the dissolving views of a magic-lantern, emerging from the darkness and plunging into it with a speed and a vehemence such as only gun-drivers can get out of their vehicles. Everybody has to step out of the way. A gun collides with a cart and upsets it; with a crash, a shriek, a thud, the human cargo rolls into the slush, and the next gun goes right through the sprawling heap of maimed mankind. It does not much matter: only a few wounded men wounded a little more. Where they have fallen there is a purple pool; when we pass the spot a minute later the men's heavy tread splashes our faces with red specks. We come to a street where they have not lighted a fire, and where the confusion

is worse in the impenetrable darkness. We are hailed, and find our progress impeded until an obliging resident brings a lamp, and we discover that we have encountered a small body of prisoners. Next we come to an important crossing where there are two huge fires, and where a sight greets us at which my men give a shout of joy: half a dozen Bulgarians dangling from gallows improvised in front of their own doors, like bundles of wet rags, with sullen, ashy faces and vacant eyes. At the feet of one is a weeping woman; near another are children crunching apples, and wondering why their father looks so funny. In the same street women bring us coffee and cakes, which we consume in view of the gallows, some men leaning against the posts and playing at shuttlecock with the culprits' legs. The foot of one hits me in the face, and the man who has made the thrust apologises: "I meant to hit Murad over there, sir; but I declare the fellow has got a twist in his knee, so that one cannot throw straight." To illustrate this he raises the dead man's leg and aims at his companion, who is holding out his hands, grinning like the wicket-keeper at a diabolical game of cricket; and, true enough, the foot describes an arc and gives a thumping knock in a corporal's capacious back. The latter turns round with a face so scared that we all burst out into a merry laugh; and this rouses me from what as a nightmare would be indescribably hideous, but what as stern reality simply baffles the illustrative powers of all the adjectives in the dictionary. I forbid the continuation of such wantonness, and my men become suddenly sober—we have all been out of our senses, after thirty hours of slaughter and horrors. I rub my eyes. Surely this has been a dream; surely this cannot be God's fair earth, on the surface of which

I have lived such a happy life, which has brought forth those I love so well—my father, my dear mother, my pretty sisters, that little girl I have left behind in the West? Fatigue overcomes me, and I dream, with open eyes, that I have been killed in battle, and that this is the hell to which God has consigned me—until Bakal calls me to myself by saying, "Do not fret, sir; these scenes are not of your doing, and you are not responsible for them." And for once in a while the sergeant turns prophet. "To him who is responsible," he says, indicating the direction of the Russian head-quarters with a solemn gesture, "a tremendous punish-ment will be dealt out." Let not the reader think that I am romancing. It is the sober truth that Alexander II.'s awful end was prophesied to me by Sergeant Bakal, in the streets of Plevna, on September 12, 1877, an hour and a half before midnight. A hand gently laid upon my arm rouses me from the reverie into which the sergeant's words and manner have plunged me. I turn round, and behold a veiled girl, who gives me a packet of tobacco, another of cigarettes, and a flask of brandy, whispers, "Stolen from the ambulance for your dear sake," and vanishes, swiftly and noiselessly. I take a goodly sip, light a cigarette, shake myself, and am a man again. I give the order to proceed, and, thank God! we are clear of the town.

Plevna is one and a half mile long from south to north, and it had taken us two hours to pass through it. At eleven, just after we had crossed the Grivitza bridge, north of the town, and were marching into the darkness, we heard the tramp of men, and were hailed in Turkish. Our foremost man flashed the light of his lantern in search of the intruders, and the first countenance which the white patch revealed to me, like a bold sketch set

in a black frame, belonged to Jack Seymour, safe and sound, without a scratch or hurt on him—"except, old fellow, an unholy lust for a drop of something strong," which craving was immediately relieved.

After the collapse of the attack at dusk on the 11th he had found himself with his squad in Plevna. During the night he had formed the guard at one of the street-outlets, and had cheerfully assisted in meting out condign punishment to some of the Christians who had fired the haystacks. In the morning he had taken part in Tahir's abortive attempt to recover Kavanlik; in the afternoon his men had been the first to climb the parapet. After the storming he was sent back to town, to prevent outbreaks among the populace.

At midnight, half-dead with fatigue, we reached our redoubt, where excellent preparations, made by Adil's command, greeted us: fires, meat boiling in the coppers, hot coffee. During our absence the stores and sleeping chambers had been drained and covered with fresh hides and skins, so that our dwelling-place was tolerably dry and comfortable. Half an hour later the main body of the battalion arrived. We ate, drank, compared notes, gave a passing word of remembrance to missing friends, and then turned in and slept, after having been on our legs for forty hours, the sleep of the just and the victorious, undressed (by permission), and in a perfect luxury of leisure: for no trench, outpost, or sentry duty was allotted to my battalion. And thus ended my personal share in the biggest and bloodiest battle of the war, which in point of number of casualties ranks fourth since Waterloo, in point of proportion (20 per cent.) probably first.

The behaviour of the Turks in the third battle of Plevna shows to what heights the sons of a proud and

devout nation can rise when they are inspired by patriotism, that noblest of virtues, when they are facing a common danger, in front of the invader, strong in that absence of dissent which is born of discipline, raised by a beloved leader to his own level of moral grandeur, *conscious of fighting for a righteous cause, certain that Paradise is waiting for them, should they fall.*

CHAPTER X

PREPARING FOR THE INVESTMENT

September 13 *to October* 24, 1877

On the morning of September 13 my company was ordered to the centre, where we assisted in burying the dead in front of Omer Tabiya. A few hours' armistice had been concluded for the purpose.

A hundred Bulgarians from Plevna were compelled to help in digging, as a punishment for the outrages committed by them during the battle.

The picking-up of their wounded in the maize-fields between Radishevo and Omer Tabiya must have been a difficult matter to the Russians. Many maimed men were left for three or four days in the corn before being discovered.

The dead were buried in holes containing 50 to 100 each, the officers in separate places, Turks and Russians apart. Bulgarian popes and our own priests recited a few pious words. Stakes, branches of trees, or demolished rifles marked the graves.

I kept an exact account of the numbers interred, and of the names and battalions of the Turkish victims, so far as these could be ascertained. Money, valuables, documents, arms, cartridges, water-bottles, were taken

from the corpses and delivered to officers appointed for that purpose; also boots and uniforms, if in good condition.

We were supplied with dinner from Omer Tabiya. In the afternoon another company relieved us, and we escorted to town a train of carts with rifles, bayonets, fezes, boots, and so forth. The day was tolerably fine.

In the neighbourhood of Bash and Kanli Tabiyas the negotiations with the object of determining a line of demarcation had failed, in consequence of which many bodies were here left unburied for a week. They infected the air and caused illness. Some were never interred, and became skeletons, thanks to dogs and birds.

We returned to our redoubt towards dusk, and had nothing more to do for the rest of the day. There was no shelling on the 13th. In the night of the 13th to the 14th I assisted at the capture and hanging of a gang (10 men and 3 women) of battlefield marauders —sirtlanlar, hyænas, as they used to be called. Happily space-considerations give me a legitimate excuse for passing over, with this bare mention, a scene which I do not care to recall. It was the most horrible I have witnessed in a war exceptionally rich in horrors.

The next day (September 14) passed without incident and without work, save the redoubt routine.

On the 15th the list of the casualties which the battalion had incurred was complete, numbers of stragglers having come in during the two days after the battle, and a clean copy was sent to headquarters. Most of the stragglers had either witnesses or certificates to prove that they had fought elsewhere. Those who had not were charged with desertion and cowardice, but were, I believe, after a cursory investigation,

acquitted. After a successful action many sins are forgiven. Two men of my company remained missing. On this day it became known in camp that the Orkanyé-Plevna wire had again been cut. The enemy's cavalry was holding the Orkanyé road; which fact caused us some anxiety, more so than the interruption of communication with Rahova, Lom Palankah, and Widdin; for from these places—all undermanned, and provisioned only for their own garrisons—we had no help to expect, whilst the concentration of a strong reinforcement column and the collection of large stores in Orkanyé had commenced long before the third battle. The rations were reduced, and strict economy in every commodity was enjoined. We were thus cut off from the world; but the troops' confidence in their leader was such that they felt convinced that he would not suffer this state of things to continue for long; in which expectation they were not disappointed. The soldiers were in good spirits; *morale* and discipline were excellent. On the other hand, it is admitted that the Russian troops were depressed and demoralised up to the time that Todleben's reputation and activity induced them to recover confidence.

From September 14 to the end of the campaign shells were exchanged almost daily between the two camps; but during September and October there was little night firing.

The health of Plevna camp gave cause for anxiety: dysentery increased alarmingly, and there were cases of cholera and typhoid fever.

On September 16 rain set in anew. It grew chilly, and the winds (mostly north) were high. Dirty weather continued without interruption for a month, and was the cause of exquisite misery.

On the 17th a curious rumour spread in camp, that England had declared war against Russia. For some hours we were in a state of the greatest excitement.

On the 18th the Roumanians attacked Bash Tabiya from Kanli Tabiya. My battalion was sent to the former, but arrived when the enemy had already retreated. The onslaught had been furious and the resistance desperate. The affair cost the Turks 100, the Roumanians 500, in killed and wounded. The dead were mixed with the corpses remaining from the third battle, which attracted flocks of birds, and proved of horrible interest to the dogs.

My battalion was ordered to occupy the trenches, to give those troops who had taken part in the fray time to recover. The stench emitted by the corpse-studded space between the two redoubts was horrible. We were within 100 yards of the enemy's foremost posts. I foolishly climbed the bank of the trench, and received a shot in the leg. As it was a spent bullet, it could not have proceeded from the trenches of Kanli Tabiya. The ball—or, to be exact, shreds of my clothing with the bullet on the top of them—stuck in the flesh, just below the surface, and caused little inconvenience or pain. When the surgeon came round he removed the intruders with one dexterous knife-cut, washed the wound, and bound it up. It bled freely, but not for long. An hour later I was seized with violent pains and spasms in the stomach, accompanied by diarrhœa. The doctor pronounced the dreaded words, "itch agrissi" (dysentery); I was packed on a cart with wounded, being helpless and prostrate, and was sent to Plevna. As I was in a stupor during the journey, all consciousness of its tortures was spared to me.

I had freely partaken of fruit in the morning, in

defiance of Bakal's warning; this, with the infected air and the excitement caused by the wound had, I presume, brought on the attack.

On my arrival in town I was sent to a fever hospital established in a mosque, in which were 200 patients. The few doctors—among them a German—who were available for this work, and who had also ambulances to attend to, did their best, assisted by convalescent soldiers and civilians. Nevertheless, my sojourn in this place was a terrible experience. Quinine, laudanum, and drugs generally ran short; for the Russian cavalry had intercepted a convoy with these commodities. There was hardly any brandy in camp; food was the reverse of plentiful, and was given insufficiently salted, the enemy having captured nine waggon-loads of salt, sugar, and spices. The scarcity of salt lasted, more or less, up to the end of the campaign, and was the worst feature of the privations we had to undergo. The uselessness of money was brought home to me in those days; secretly I paid twenty-five piastres (4*s.* 8*d.*) for a few pinches of salt; later, five sovereigns would not have purchased an ounce. Many patients died from want of strengthening food who would have recovered under ordinary circumstances.

Add to the hardships I have mentioned a cold building; a damp and infected atmosphere; rough beds of skins, matting, a blanket, a handful of straw, and a few rags on the stone floor; a company of prostrate fellow-sufferers; and the gloomy outlook generally, with, in my case, both a wound and a disease to torment me: and you may, with a vivid imagination, form a notion of the miseries I underwent.

The wounded of the third battle were still in Plevna: owing to the interruption of the communication with

Orkanyé they could not be sent to the latter place, as had been done after the previous actions. The surgeon-in-chief, Hassib Bey, visited us daily, and altogether the medical men did their utmost; that things were, nevertheless, execrable, was not their fault.

There were quacks and sorcerers in the town whom the common soldiers, notably those hailing from Asia, revered and trusted; their hocus-pocus was tolerated, but they were not allowed to prescribe or administer.

Among the patients were several Russians and Roumanians, fever-stricken prisoners from the third battle, who were housed in a separate corner and were treated with great kindness.

My money purchased many commodities, at exorbitant rates—for instance, ten piastres (1*s.* 10*d.*), a spoonful of brandy—and a girl-friend in town sent me daily luxuries by means of a bribed messenger, such as broth, port wine, eggs, wheatmeal cakes. With these advantages my strong constitution overcame the disease speedily; the wound was healing satisfactorily and gave no trouble, and on the fourth day (September 23) I was sufficiently well to get up—against orders—and crawl out by stealth in the afternoon, with the intention of trying to obtain a conveyance to the redoubt; for even my former sleeping-quarters, rough and comfortless as they were, seemed to me a paradise compared to that purgatory of pain-convulsed, diarrhœa-stricken patients, with its stench, its groans of men sick of life, its fresh corpses every day.

When I came to the konak in the centre of the town, supported by a stick which a labourer had cut for me, some officers who had duties in connection with the administration of stores took compassion upon my weakness, called me in and gave me part of their

dinner, each contributing a mite and helping to make up a goodly meal. Hardly had we finished when there was a commotion outside, and we learnt that the column from Orkanyé, aided by the troops which the Mushir had sent to meet it, had forced the enemy's lines and was approaching Plevna, the large train being safe and intact. Coffee was immediately made and the remaining cigarettes were distributed: for there was now no need of economy. At the invitation of my kindly hosts I remained in the konak some hours longer, sitting by the window, smoking, and drowsily watching the merciless rain, as it transformed the deserted little square in front of the building into a lake of turbid, liquid mud. The wind was high, and tore the swift, dark clouds into grotesque and rugged shapes; the atmosphere was thick, raw, and chilly; altogether it was one of those typical autumn days which make one long for closed blinds, cosy lamplight, a peaceful fireside, luxuries I dreamt of enviously as I shivered in the draughty, cheerless room, which served as office to the administration of stores in daytime, and as sleeping-quarters to a dozen men at night.

Towards dusk I thought it high time to leave, if I meant to get a conveyance to the redoubt that day. I dreaded going back to the mosque, fearing the derision of those who had seen me depart in the afternoon. The rain showed no signs of ceasing, so I wrapped my great-coat round me and set forth with the aid of my stick. Hardly had I walked 200 yards in the direction of the trysting-place of the carts when I fell, partly from weakness, partly owing to the slipperiness of the soil, and sprained my ankle. I managed to get up, but could not put my foot to the ground; so I limped to the nearest fence and waited for events, in a sore

plight of pain, helplessness, wet, dirt, and diarrhœa—which latter had suddenly returned. Not far from me was a house flying the Red Crescent. A man took me thither. This was an ambulance conducted by a German surgeon, Lange by name, if I remember correctly. Happily he had a bed vacant, the inmate of which had just died. The corpse was taken out, the bedding received a *pro forma* shake, and I was installed. My foot was bathed and bandaged, and the wound in my leg, which had broken out afresh, was attended to. The diarrhœa was stopped by a copious draught of an opiate, and did not reappear. I had a good supper. In the night I heard the tramp of battalions: the advanced guard of the Orkanyé column was coming in. At dawn there was half an hour's cannonade in the west: the main body was engaged with Russian cavalry. At noon (September 24) the column arrived in town, and was enthusiastically received. I stayed in the ambulance for, I think, a week. It held fifty patients; ten shared my room. Food was once more good and plentiful; even luxuries (tobacco, brandy, broth, milk, coffee) were distributed; drugs and medicines were sufficient; treatment was considerate and competent, attendance mediocre, the doctor having no help except two unskilled and overworked assistants (convalescent soldiers), and no menials save an aged Turkish vineyard labourer, who looked like the demon of unrighteousness and behaved like an angel of mercy. This man had the occasional voluntary aid of patriotic residents, and was also assisted by the compulsory labour of a couple of stalwart, sullen Bulgarians, who had offended, and had to scrub the floors by way of punishment.

By October 1 I had overcome my three ailments—

shot, sprained ankle, dysentery—and returned to my redoubt on a cart conveying maize. In the meantime my captain had recovered from the wound received in the second battle, and had arrived in Plevna from Sofia with the Orkanyé column. The company was again in his charge, and I had my old squad, Jack his, Tereb (meanwhile cured) that of the late Mehemed Hardar, Azif the colour squad. Thus we had once more our full complement of five officers, and my second company command was at an end, having lasted—exclusive of sojourn in ambulances—from August 4 to September 18, forty-five days.

This arrangement did not hold good for long. On October 7 the captain was transferred to another company of my battalion, which had a dearth of officers. I became, for the third time, company leader, and retained this position up to the surrender (fifty-six days, October 7 to December 10, deducting eight days spent in the hospital in November); the colour squad and my old squad were fused into one. The company, now reduced by illness and losses to 110 men, counted three squads, the first under Seymour, the second under Tereb, the third under Azif. At this strength and in this order we remained until the beginning of November.

On October 1 the enemy's forces commenced to approach our positions and—what they had not done before—to fortify themselves. Soon their line formed a semicircle concentric with ours, from Bivolar in the north, *viâ* Kanli Tabiya, Grivitza, and Radishevo, to Brestovitz in the south. The average distance between the two front lines was 1500 yards, but at Kanli Tabiya it was less than 100 yards.

It is necessary here to summarise the adventures of the Orkanyé reinforcement column.

The column, commanded by General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha and consisting of 17 battalions, 6 squadrons, and 12 guns, say 10,000 men, started from Orkanyé early on September 18 in the following order : Advanced guard, Edhem Pasha, 6 battalions, 4 squadrons, 2 guns. Main body with train, Ahmed Hifzi Pasha, 8 battalions, 1 squadron, 6 guns. Rear, Tahir Bey, 3 battalions, 1 squadron, 4 guns. The train consisted of 600 carts with victuals and clothing, 50 artillery ammunition waggons, 500 packhorses and 200 carts with infantry ammunition, and 2000 head of cattle.

The journey to Telish took three days, owing to the bad weather, to the condition of the soil, and to the fact that the Russians had destroyed several bridges. Near Telish the enemy had made a long stretch of the road impassable. Ahmed Hifzi, who had arrived in Telish on the evening of the 20th, was compelled to stop here ; the troops erected earthworks while the engineers repaired the road. On the 21st the Russians attacked, and were driven off. At dawn on the 22nd the column started, after having again been attacked. There being strong masses of hostile cavalry on the flanks and in the rear, whilst the road and the country ahead seemed to be open, Ahmed Hifzi made a rearrangement of his column : he transferred five battalions of the advanced guard to the rear, and placed the latter under Edhem Pasha. Thus the order was :—

Advanced Guard : Isset Bey.
1 battalion, 4 squadrons, 2 guns.
Main body, with train : Ahmed Hifzi Pasha
8 battalions, 1 squadron, 6 guns.
Rear : Edhem Pasha.
8 battalions, 1 squadron, 4 guns.

At noon on the 22nd the van reached Gorna Dubnik, and whilst the main body and the train were marching in, the Russians attacked the rear. The fighting lasted till nine at night, when the enemy retreated. The Turkish losses were trifling; Edhem Pasha was wounded. The thirty hostile guns inflicted little punishment.

Next day (23rd) a squadron of regular cavalry arrived from Dolna Dubnik, where the detachment sent by Osman from Plevna to facilitate Ahmed Hifzi's advance had bivouacked; this force consisted of 6 battalions, 12 squadrons; or, 4000 men, with 6 guns, and was commanded by Atouf Pasha.

They had occupied Dolna Dubnik after a smart encounter; thus the communication with Ahmed Hifzi was established and the road was open. Ahmed Hifzi arrived in Dolna Dubnik on the 23rd, and sent his van, with part of the train, the same night to Plevna, where it arrived before dawn; the main body had half an hour's cannonade with the enemy early on the 24th; and reached Plevna at noon with not a single cart missing. The expedition had cost the Turks from first to last no more than fifty men in killed and wounded.

Eight thousand Russian and Roumanian horsemen and forty guns had been unable to impede the progress of a procession of vehicles which must have been fifteen miles long.

The strength of the Plevna army was, after September 24: 63 battalions infantry, 25 squadrons cavalry, 500 Circassians, 14 batteries artillery, 3 companies engineers; or, 34,000 men with 84 guns, at which figure it remained (less casualties) till October 8.

After the arrival of Ahmed Hifzi's column we had

plenty of everything save forage; to make good this deficiency, by getting in the large stores of grain, hay, and straw of the surrounding villages, Osman organised, on September 27, a flying column, consisting of 12 battalions, 8 squadrons, 6 guns, with 300 empty carts, total, 6000 men; commander, Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

This force concentrated between Plevna and the Vid bridge on the evening of September 27, started from the bridge at daybreak on the 28th, and between this day and October 3 it got all the stores of both Dubniks, both Netropoliés, Ternina, Blasivatz, Disevitza, Kartushaven, and Medeven into Plevna without being prevented by the enemy, who attacked on September 28 and 30 and was repelled. The fighting on the last-named day was severe, and cost the Turks 200 in killed and wounded, the Russians treble that number. The 300 carts were filled from five to seven times.

From October 7 to 24 the Orkanyé road was open. During this time there arrived many small trains of supplies, and one large one, escorted by a column under Chefket Pasha, commander of Orkanyé, which started on October 5, and was composed of 21 battalions, 800 irregular cavalry, 12 guns, say 16,000 men, with 500 carts with victuals, 400 packhorses with ammunition, and 4000 head of cattle. Total: 21 battalions; or, 16,000 men with 12 guns.

Chefket Pasha was the bearer of an autograph letter from the Sultan to Osman, in which the title of Ghazi was conferred upon the latter.

On the 6th the column had a successful engagement with the enemy's cavalry.

On the 7th Telish was reached, which was fortified,

and garrisoned by six battalions and four guns. Snow fell, and the roads were execrable; it froze hard for several days, and in parts the snow stood twelve to eighteen inches deep. The journey was one of great difficulties, despite the fact that the Russians made no serious attempt to interrupt it.

On the same day (October 7) a column was sent from Plevna to meet Chefket half-way, which was composed of 17 battalions, 18 squadrons; or, 9000 men, with 12 guns, and commanded by Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

The two detachments met between Telish and Gorna Dubnik, and on October 8 Chefket and the bulk of his column entered Plevna, having lost not a single cart and only a few men, the latter being mostly casualties arising from accidents. In town the gallant and clever Commander of Orkanyé was received with well-deserved enthusiasm; for ever since our arrival in Plevna it was due to him that we had been kept so well supplied.

The road was once more open; the telegraph had been restored. Between October 8 and 24 supplies came in almost daily, but no further reinforcements arrived. The hospitals and ambulances of Plevna were evacuated, the wounded, the sick, and the prisoners being sent to Orkanyé, and thence to Sofia.

Chefket had consultations with Osman and his officers. It became known that his greatest difficulty was to obtain a sufficient number of carts; the country had been ransacked for these, and the owners were clamouring for the return of their properties; in many places the corn was rotting in the fields for want of vehicles to convey it to the stores. In addition to this, Chefket did not receive the desirable and necessary assistance from the civil officials. How often it happens

in warfare that the stay-at-home pen-and-ink heroes undo that which brave men with sword and rifle accomplish at the cost of life, limb, and health!

To give the reader an idea of the task of supplying an army, I may remark that 250 carts with victuals and 1000 head of cattle constituted a week's sustenance of the Plevna troops, not to mention forage, clothing, arms, and ammunition.

Chefket Pasha returned to Orkanyé on October 9 with a mounted escort and a few companies, and captured on the way a Russian convoy with 15,000 sheep and bullocks, part of which he sent to Plevna.

The strength of the Plevna army was now: 84 battalions infantry, 25 squadrons cavalry, 1000 Circassians (12 squadrons), 16 batteries of artillery, 3 companies of engineers, 1 battalion of volunteers (foot), 1 squadron of mounted volunteers; or, 48,000 men, with 96 guns.

This was the highest figure which the Plevna army reached at any time. At this strength it remained until October 24, when the enemy completed the circle which surrounded the Turkish camp, and thus commenced the second, or real, investment of Plevna, which was never interrupted, and ended only with the sortie of December 10.

Of Osman's 84 battalions, 67 were in Plevna Camp, 5 at Dolna Dubnik, 6 at Gorna Dubnik, 6 at Telish.

The important points on the Orkanyé road between Telish and Orkanyé had been garrisoned by Chefket Pasha with troops taken from the stationary division of the latter place, each town by two or three battalions and two to six guns. Thus the road was occupied in stages.

In addition, Chefket Pasha had in each of the

following places: Etropol, Tashkessen, Kormatzi, Strigel—one to three battalions and two to six guns. In Sofia there were at that time only five battalions, three squadrons, and six guns. In the beginning of November a large army concentrated south of the Baba Konak Pass, between the latter and Sofia, under Mehemed Ali Pasha, which, although as early as November 7 it comprised forty-three battalions, twenty-eight squadrons, and six batteries (24,000 men), was not able to assist Osman Pasha. This was the long-promised, much-talked of, and bitterly disappointing "Army for the relief of Plevna," as it was grandiloquently styled.

The famous Englishman, Baker Pasha, commanded a Brigade of this Army, and fought later (December 31) the tactically celebrated rearguard action of Tashkessen.

The forces nominally under Osman's command on October 24 comprised 115 battalions, 28 squadrons, and 20 batteries. As on this day he was cut off from the world, he practically ceased to command any but the Plevna troops.*

The stages of the Orkanyé road were utilised almost daily between October 8 and 24 for getting in supplies, each station sending an escort to the next, so that special convoys were rendered unnecessary. The trains of invalids from Plevna, bound for Orkanyé, were treated in the same manner.

I return to the personal part of my narrative. I have said that on October 1st I arrived at my redoubt, and that on the 7th I resumed command of my company. Between these two dates nothing of any moment happened. We had no fighting to do, and our occupation consisted of the bare redoubt routine. The

* For *Ordre de Bataille* and List of Redoubts see Appendix.

health of the men was unsatisfactory, but spirit and *morale* were good. We were convinced that the Sultan would not allow the Plevna troops, the one army of the Empire which had been uniformly victorious and had upheld the honour of the Crescent banner in the eyes of the country and the world, to succumb for want of support. How sadly were we disappointed in this!

The weather was cold and wet. On the 7th there was a heavy fall of snow in the morning. It thawed during the day, and at night it froze, and snowed again; for some days locomotion on either the slush or ice-covered ground was difficult and dangerous. Several accidents occurred. One man of my battalion, in falling, impaled himself on his bayonet. The cart-oxen suffered severely. We heard of frost and snows in and on the northern slopes of the Balkans; the roads were impassable, and even the good Orkanyé road was in a bad state. With us snow and rain continued for a week, when we had a spell of moderately fine weather, lasting a few days—after which the winter set in with deadly earnest.

Shells were exchanged daily. The Russians had constructed a line of entrenchments 1700 to 2000 yards north of our north front, and parallel with it, and began to honour my redoubt with their attentions, for the first time since the second battle; but their projectiles invariably fell short.

We had now a small redoubt called Yeni Tabiya on our left, at right angles across the Nikopoli road, thus establishing a more intimate connection with the Bukova redoubts.

On the 8th the Sultan's letter to Osman, conferring the title of Ghazi upon our leader, and thanking him

and his army for the brilliant victory of September 11 and 12, was read out during parade. It was an interesting and impressive ceremony. The troops cheered enthusiastically, and the artillery fired the customary volley. We were in high spirits, and wished for nothing more than that the Russians would again attack—in which hope we were disappointed. The spectres of investment and starvation, having once already shown their ugly faces to us in a manner that left no doubt as to the deadly earnest of their intentions, had conveniently retired out of sight for the time being; for the Orkanyé road was again open, was fortified and garrisoned in its cleverly chosen stages, and commanded by such able men as Ahmed Hifzi and Chefket. Nevertheless, we knew that those blood-thirsty demons were lurking round the corner, waiting for the slightest chance offered to them by any error of commission or omission on our part to enclose us in their fangs. But, we argued, should the worst come to the worst, should the road again be occupied by the Russians—was it likely that the Sultan and the nation would leave the gallant Plevna army in the lurch? Alas! they did, and, unhappily for us, the effort for which the enemy was preparing was not a fresh attack, as we fondly hoped and believed, not even a regular siege, but a simple investment, tedious and inglorious, almost without fighting, and devoid of any chances of success for us save those coming from without. And as succour never reached us, however faithfully promised by the Padishah, Plevna, although gloriously defended, was bound to fall.

It stands to reason that frost, snow, rain, dysentery, fever, and other disorders affected our temper, comfort, and well-being; but we managed to brave these foes

also, and up to the end of November we kept our spirits and hoped from day to day for relief.

In Bash Tabiya, separated from the Russian front line by a hundred yards only, two battalions were stationary; these were assisted by another battalion, taken in turns from the First Division; the latter occupied the trenches, whilst the stationary battalions held the redoubt itself and the reserve entrenchment in the rear. The auxiliary battalion was relieved every two days, and it fell to the lot of mine to proceed to this, the most exposed point of our front, the post of honour and danger, on October 15.

I must mention that in Bash and Kanli Tabiyas mining operations were conducted, but neither the Turks nor the Roumanians exploded their mines.

Nothing occurred during my stay in Bash Tabiya, except some desultory shelling and rifle-firing; my men, in the first trench, brought down a gang of Roumanians working at their entrenchments. We fired on every man who showed ever so small a portion of his body; sometimes twenty rifles were levelled at a shoulder, a cap, the corner of a coat. When we brought the game down we shouted with delight. It was very entertaining and exhilarating, and the excitement of the chase improved our temper amazingly.

On the 17th we returned to our redoubt. Next day it was made known in camp that the Russian corps of Guards and Grenadiers had arrived in Sistova, and were proceeding to join the army operating against Plevna. We also heard of the famous Todleben's installation as "Assistant" to Prince Charles of Roumania, which meant, as commander; thus we knew that the issue between Turkey and Russia on

this point—that is, the issue of the war—was to be decided by the skill and science of military engineers.

On October 19 the Roumanians attacked Bash Tabiya, and were repulsed. They renewed their onslaught during the night with the same result. Their losses amounted to 1000, ours to 200, in killed and wounded. The fighting was of the most ferocious description. The Romanians used ladders for climbing the redoubt, whilst the Turks battered the assailants' heads in with butt-ends of rifles, axes, spades, anything that came handy. Reinforcements were sent from my redoubt and from other works, but were not required. This was the last attempt made by the enemy to take Bash Tabiya by assault.

On the 20th there was heavy shelling on both sides for an hour or two. We turned out for battle, but were not attacked. My battalion lost ten men by shells; my company had no casualties. Weather cold but clear.

October 21.—Desultory shelling all day long. Snow set in again, after a few days' interruption, and lasted, on and off, until the end of the campaign. Fresh rumours of an Anglo-Turkish alliance, this time with such appearance of probability and such minuteness of detail that even Jack and I were constrained to believe in them. For an hour or two we were terribly excited. Adil Pasha, appealed to, characterised the reports as lies. At night a violent and urgent alarm was raised. My company, for once in a while, had been given permission to undress. We turned out in a variety of charming *négligés*. The company presented such a grotesque appearance by the light of a hastily made up fire that the night rang with our laughter. One man wore a woman's petticoat; another, fez,

towel, and boots; a third, bathing-drawers and spectacles; a fourth, a blanket. The alarm turned out to be false, but we had a hearty laugh.

October 22.—A black day. My company occupies front trench; a few Circassians are placed under my orders. I inspect the outposts. When I return, some hours later, I am bidden to the ferik. It appears the Circassians have committed a murderous assault upon a Bulgarian family on the tramp, have outraged the women, nearly killed a baby, maimed the pater-familias. The ferik reads me a severe lecture. I reply that although I am fully aware of my responsibility, and do not intend to shirk it, I beg of him to take into consideration the fact of my having been a mile away when the affair happened, and not having heard of it until three hours afterwards. He says in substance: "You can go, but do not do it again." So far as I am concerned the affair is buried in oblivion; not so with the Circassians, who were court-martialed and severely punished. What made it worse for them is the fact that these Bulgarians were not clandestine fugitives, but had left Plevna with the Mushir's permission; in fact, they had a safe-conduct as far as our front line.

My major is very cross with me for an hour or so; but I tender an apology and a packet of cigarettes—the remains of a lady's present, made to me during my recent stay in town—with that "demure impudence" (as Jack Seymour calls it) which I have often found serviceable. He laughs, and never alludes to the subject again. The colonel gives me one of the blackest looks I have ever had; an hour afterwards he comes to "borrow" cigarettes.

October 23.—Violent shelling all day long. My

company lost two men. We are in battle order from morning till nightfall. It becomes known that the Russians are drawing their right and left flanks westward, north and south of Plevna respectively, with a view of joining hands west of Plevna. From our ladder we can see the movements of troops two miles to the north and north-west. Cold day; slight snowfall. At night we are told that the Mushir has again asked for permission to evacuate Plevna whilst there is time, with a view of making Orkanyé the centre of operations, and joining hands with the army about to concentrate south of the Baba Konak Pass, under the leadership of Mehemed Ali Pasha, ordered to Sofia for this purpose, after having been replaced (on October 2) by Suleiman Pasha as Serdar Ekrem. The Sultan's telegraphic reply is a peremptory veto. "Plevna has acquired such importance, strategical and political, that you must stay at any cost"—such is the substance of the Imperial decree, with the addition of voluble promises of help. We still believe in our Sovereign's fair words, and are of good cheer. Later (in Russia), I learnt that on October 25—that is, a day after the investment had become an accomplished fact—the Sultan had changed his mind and given his consent to Osman's project to evacuate Plevna. Once again, "Just too late."

October 24.—Heavy cannonade all day long at all points of the lines. We hear in the evening that there has been a serious engagement in the south-west between Krishin and Ternina, and that the Russians, although they were repeatedly repulsed, and left, when retreating hastily, the baggage of an entire regiment in the hands of the Turks, have finally succeeded in establishing themselves on the hills around Ternina. In this action

the heroes of the third battle, Tewfik Pasha and Yunuz Bey, again distinguished themselves. The Turks lost 100 men, the Russians three times that number. On this day the Roumanians occupy Gorna Netropolié and Dolna Netropolié. We are anxious and excited, having been told that the wire to Orkanyé has been cut just as Osman was in telegraphic conversation with Chefket; that the look-outs in the observatories of the Krishin redoubts and in the windmills on the hilltops have reported cannonade and smoke in the west; that Colonel Veli Bey, the commander of Dolna Dubnik, has sent a message to the effect that communication with Gorna Dubnik is interrupted, and that there has been severe fighting in the vicinity of the latter place.

Thus we were once more cut off from the world, and this time for good. The Orkanyé road was lost to the Turks for ever, and the circle which surrounded Plevna was complete; for the Russian-Roumanian cavalry held the section between Gorna Dubnik and Ribina.

The troops soon regained their spirits after the terrifying effect of these news had worn off; for had not the Padishah given his Imperial word that help would be sent, not only in the shape of convoys with food and clothing, but also by means of a strong army of relief, which was about to be organised by no less a person than Mehemed Ali Pasha, our late Serdar Ekrem, the only man who, in his sturdy German honesty and hatred of Eastern dilatoriness, jobbery, and corruption, could save the Empire from the consequences, now apparent everywhere, of the accursed Petticoat-Pasha *régime?* And if one could not believe in an Emperor's solemn promise, whose word could

still be held sacred? Was it likely that the nation would forget the Plevna army, the victors in three brilliant actions, battles which had rendered the name "Plevna" famous wherever the telegraph had flashed and the journals carried it? We had been told that throughout the Sultan's dominions patriotic songs with Victorious Osman for their hero and "Plevna shall never fall" for their burden were sung in *cafés*, in the streets, in public places; that men talked of nothing and nobody else but Plevna and Osman; that children played in the gutters at "Plevna"; that the mosques were thronged with worshippers, who prayed the God of Battles to assist the defenders of the country and the Faith in the fights to come, as He had done so manifestly in the fights that had been. Yes, we trusted in God to protect us, in the Prophet to intercede for us; we trusted the Sultan to fulfil his promise, the nation to aid us; and we trusted in our own powers to carry us through—which last-named trust will never fail as long as man has power, physical, moral, and intellectual. When despair is blackest, when even hope seems quixotic, because there is nothing left to hope for, when all is lost *fors l'honneur*—even then there is the power remaining to man to rise to the loftiest pinnacle of manhood. To that height did the Ottoman troops rise during the period which ended with the day on which we made our last and supreme effort, that stupendous rush for liberty which will live in the records of history as one of its grandest and noblest episodes. Life is nothing in itself: only death can fix upon it the proper value; and we were determined, each and all, that death, should we fall, should stamp our lives as "well spent."

We trusted in God, but meanwhile we kept our

powder dry; which means that we were unremitting in our vigilance. Woe to any Ghiaur who dared show a few inches of his miserable carcase: our bullets soon brought him down. Food we knew to be abundant; in fact, every commodity was well represented in the stores of the Plevna mosques, save, perhaps, firewood, salt, and boots. Even the continual frost and snow, the cold blasts, the permanent exposure to the rigour of this almost Arctic winter, the comfortless quarters, the alarming spread of illness, did not dishearten us.

We learnt only a week later what had actually happened in Gorna Dubnik and Telish on October 24; but as the date belongs to the present chapter I shall summarise here the occurrences of this eventful and fatal day, for which purpose I shall have to carry the reader back to the third battle.

After the ignominious failure of the much-talked-of, assiduously-prepared-for, anxiously expected storming of Plevna, which was to end the war brilliantly with one blow, which was to restore confidence at home and prestige abroad, which was to break the record as regards bayonet charges on entrenched camps, hitherto claimed for the storming of Düppel in the Danish War of 1864, despair seized the Russian leaders. The Czar began to have qualms of conscience, owing to the fearful bloodshed already incurred, though the campaign had barely commenced; internal troubles shook the Empire, and could be appeased only by dazzling victories; thinking Russians had arrived at a proper estimate of the "Christians" whom they had come to "save." To give up the war would be ruination for Russia's honour in the eyes of the country and of Europe; to continue at this rate, with Osman unconquered in the flank, would mean gradual annihilation

of the Russian armies. Already 50,000 men had been sacrificed to this monster of iniquity—whose own losses were not a fifth of that figure—who had the barbaric impudence to impede the progress of Christian civilisation, as understood by Russia. What was wanted now was a man to cope with this Mahomedan Moloch ; and at the supreme moment, after the inglorious defeat which seemed likely to cover the name of Russia with ridicule and dishonour, Alexander II. bethought himself of the man who, twenty-three years before, had made the world ring with his fame, who had been insolently passed over when the campaign commenced —Todleben, perhaps the greatest military engineer whom the world has seen, who was destined to add to the undying name of Defender of Sebastopol, that of Conqueror of Plevna.

Treated with contumely in May, General Todleben was hailed as the saviour of Russian prestige and military honour when he reached Gorna Studen, the Czar's residence, on September 27. On the 30th he arrived at Porodim, which was his headquarters at the commencement ; later, and until Plevna fell, he resided in Tultchenitza. On October 4 the Imperial Ukase was published which appointed Todleben " Pashmushnik " (Adjutant, Assistant) to the Commander of the West Army, Prince Charles of Roumania ; which meant, commander, inasmuch as the Prince continued to be a mere figure-head. A separate staff was given to Todleben, of which Prince Imeretinski became the chief, General Reitlinger Chief Engineer, General Moller Commander of Artillery ; there were several other trained engineers of high standing on the Staff. General Sotow, hitherto Chief-of-Staff to Prince Charles, and real leader of the army, retired to the comparative

obscurity of Commander of the Fourth Corps (his original office), lately led by Krylow, who became Chief of the Cavalry on the left Vid bank. Some medical men of the highest repute were sent for, to attend to the sanitary condition of the West Army, which from all accounts seems to have been worse than that of the Turks. Doctor Köcher, an authority on military sanitation, was appointed Chief Medical Inspector.

General Todleben's decision, to which he clung with remarkable obduracy till the end, in spite of violent, if abortive, opposition on the part of the Grand Duke Nicholas, Generals Gourko and Skobeleff, and some others, was that Plevna should, and could only, be taken by a rigid investment. Todleben's dictum: "Plevna is the strongest fortress ever made by the hand of man, and, if defended by Turks, impregnable," has become historic. Any further attempts at storming would be as fruitless and as disastrous as that of September 11 had been. A regular siege was out of the question, in view of the extent of the Turkish camp (twenty-five square miles in area; total length of front lines, thirty miles), and from the fact that the Russians had no siege artillery on the spot (except thirty heavy guns), and would not be able to get any—with the distance to be traversed, the state of the roads, the weather, and the Bulgarian winter ahead—for, perhaps, months to come. From first to last Todleben never stirred a hair's-breadth from his original intention, which he carried through with indomitable energy and an admirable directness of purpose. In Sotow, Krüdener, and Imeretinski he found devoted followers. These men had felt the heaviness of Osman's hand,

and shrank from fresh encounters. The Czar was throughout in agreement with Todleben.

The latter perceived at once that an investment could not be properly maintained without strong reinforcements. The Imperial Guards and Grenadiers were despatched from St. Petersburg. Meanwhile the last three weeks of September and the first three of October were spent in inactivity, excepting the Roumanian onslaughts on Bash Tabiya and as regards the cavalry, which, as we have seen, tried, and failed, to prevent Osman from getting supplies and reinforcements into Plevna. On October 17 the Guards arrived at Sistova, and two days later they joined the West Army. A special corps was formed, its task being to complete the investment west of Plevna. Its commander was General Gourko, of Balkan fame, a man characterised by a surprising impetuosity and a love of audacious and foolhardy ventures.

Gourko had at his disposal, the Guards' Corps, Arnold's (late Krylow's) Corps, and Loschkareff's Cavalry Division, a total of 47 battalions, 110 squadrons, and 164 guns.

Opposed to which was, on October 24: Ahmed Hifzi's division of 17 battalions, 4 squadrons, and 10 guns.

During the night of October 23–24 Gourko occupied the Orkanyé road in three places: between Dolna Dubnik and Gorna Dubnik, between Gorna Dubnik and Telish, between Telish and Radomirtzi—all three detachments facing both ways.

For the attack on Gorna Dubnik were selected twenty battalions and six squadrons (20,000 men), with sixty guns; opposed to which were six battalions and

four squadrons (3500 men), with four guns, commanded by Ahmed Hifzi Pasha, with Isset Bey as second.

For the attack on Telish were selected four battalions and twenty-two squadrons (6500 men), with twenty guns; opposed to which were six battalions (3000 men), no cavalry, and four guns, under Haki Pasha.

Against Radomirtzi and Dolna Dubnik only demonstrations were to be made.

The storming of Gorna Dubnik commenced at eight in the morning of October 24, and for ten hours 3500 Turks with four guns defended themselves magnificently and successfully against 20,000 Russians with sixty guns. Ahmed Hifzi fully justified the expectations of the Plevna army, and his men performed prodigies of bravery. At six in the evening two Russian battalions got unperceived as far as the principal Turkish redoubt, under cover of darkness, and took the work by a surprise attack. Ahmed Hifzi, Isset, and 2000 survivors were compelled to surrender, having spent their cartridges; 1500 men had been killed or disabled. The Russians made arrangements to shoot the Turkish officers—why, I have never learnt—but were stopped at the last moment by General Gourko's timely arrival upon the scene. The Cossacks fired some huts containing wounded, and burnt alive a hundred maimed and helpless men. This account was given to me by an eyewitness whom I met subsequently in Kharkoff.

The Russian losses amounted to 3400 killed and wounded; which implies that every defender killed or disabled (on an average) one assailant. The proportion of casualties to troops engaged was exceptionally heavy in this action, being, roughly, one to five. Altogether, this was one of the best-fought and, for the Turks, most creditable affairs of the war.

On the same day (October 24) Telish was repeatedly attacked, but, brilliantly defended by Haki Pasha, withstood all onslaughts. The Russians lost 1000 men, of which 900 were among the four battalions belonging to this column (or 30 per cent.), and 100 among cavalry and artillery. The Turkish losses were 200.

In the neighbourhood of Dolna Dubnik there were only unimportant skirmishes. Veli Bey informed the Mushir that he was cut off from Gorna Dubnik.

The three battalions stationed in Radomirtzi started to assist the garrison of Telish, but, finding the road barred by a force five times their strength, withdrew after a smart encounter.

That on this day the Russians occupied the Ternina hills has already been said.

The total of casualties of the various engagements fought on October 24th was: Turks, 1900; Russians, 4900.

On October 27 the Turks abandoned Dolna Dubnik, and on the 30th Telish surrendered; but these dates belong to the next chapter.

As regards the general course of the war, we in Plevna learnt only the bare outlines.

We knew that in Europe affairs were more or less *in statu quo;* that in Asia there had been severe and frequent fighting, which had culminated in a serious defeat for the Turks (the battle of the Aladja Dagh, October 14), and in the siege of Kars, the Ottoman stronghold in Asia: upon this town rested the nation's hopes so far as Asiatic operations were concerned: it had been the bone of contention in previous wars, the object and scene of many a sanguinary encounter; and its fall was to be the death-blow to the Turkish arms in Asia, as that of Plevna to those in Europe.

CHAPTER XI

THE INVESTMENT

October 25 *to December* 9, 1877

On October 25 the Russians began to shell the redoubts recently erected west of Plevna, particularly Pertev Tabiya. This cannonade lasted for four days and nights, with little interruption. There were several infantry skirmishes. The opposing lines had been brought into so close a proximity that it was found impossible to avoid engagements, although—so I ascertained later—on both sides orders to this effect had been given. During these four days there was hardly any shelling in other quarters.

The weather was cold and stormy, with fogs at dusk and light snowfalls ; this state of things continued until the end of the campaign. Occasionally it thawed, when the mud was terrible. The roads and tracks were in an awful condition. Sometimes sleet or rain took the place of snow.

On October 26 Veli Bey reported ominous silence in the direction of Gorna Dubnik. The Mushir instructed him to evacuate Dolna Dubnik and retire to Plevna. This he did, skilfully and successfully, on the following day, with some desultory fighting on

the way, bringing the Turkish inhabitants of the village with him, much to the Mushir's annoyance, for it meant so many more mouths to feed. But they had begged hard to be allowed to get into Plevna, shrinking in horror from the idea that they would have to trust themselves and their wives and daughters to the tender mercies of their Christian neighbours.

On this day (October 27) some battalions sent by the Mushir to meet Veli's column had a desperate encounter with Russian infantry in the neighbourhood of the Vid bridge, in which the Turks were victorious. The fighting in this little action was of an extraordinarily ferocious character; on both sides a third of the troops engaged were laid low.

On the following day (October 28) there was an engagement with those Russian troops who were erecting fortifications between Ternina and Brestovitz, opposite to Ghazi Osman, Yunuz, Milas, Baghché and Pertev Tabiyas. It was an offensive movement on the part of the Turks, in fact, a sortie, but had no result.

On the 30th Dolna Dubnik was occupied by the enemy.

On the 31st a few Turkish soldiers entered camp by the Vid bridge, having been liberated by General Gourko, and reported that on the 24th Gorna Dubnik had been taken, and that on the 28th Telish had surrendered, after having been exposed to three hours' shelling of extreme severity, which had killed or wounded 1800 men out of 2800. Sixteen battalions and seventy-two guns had been employed to enforce the capitulation of a place held by six battalions and four guns. Haki Pasha, the commander, had done his utmost; but he was bound to succumb to so terrific

a superiority. The Russians had reason to remember the sound beating they had received from this officer on the 24th; hence the despatch of such a ridiculous force.

The fall of Gorna Dubnik and Telish was made known to the troops, and, naturally, the news did not tend to improve our spirits. For some hours we were very despondent.

The strength of the Plevna army was thus reduced to seventy-two battalions, twenty-one squadrons (exclusive of twelve squadrons of Circassians, most of whom disbanded before the sortie), and eighty-eight guns; or, 40,000 men (deducting 1500 for loss from all causes in Plevna camp between October 8 and November 1). This was approximately our strength in the beginning of November, after which period disease wrought sad havoc in the Ottoman ranks. From the *ordre de bataille* the Fourth Division was obliterated, Veli Bey's five battalions having been added to the Fifth (now Fourth) Division.

The Russian army of investment, which now surrounded Plevna in a circle with a radius of six miles, was composed of 170 battalions, 152 squadrons, and 571 guns.

This was its strength up to November 15, after which date it was diminished by detachments being sent out, namely, part of Gourko's corps southward, and a Roumanian division westward. I shall briefly deal with these expeditions; but it must be understood that we did not hear of these things in their proper order, nor in their entirety, but only piecemeal, through spies and prisoners, or from the Russian leaders, who were wise enough to inform us of some of these occurrences, mostly by means of newspapers.

Flying detachments from Gourko's force had occupied Teteven on the 2nd, Vratza on the 9th, Radomirtzi, Lukovitza, Yablonitza, and Osikovo between November 2 and 10—all of which were voluntarily evacuated by the Turks. A strong force, under Gourko's personal command, seized the Rosalita Pass on the 17th, Pravetz on the 23rd, Etropol on the 24th. The vanguard of Mehemed Ali's Baba Konak army, stationed in Orkanyé, was compelled to abandon this place; the army retreated to Sofia, with advanced posts in Tashkessen, Kormatzi, and Strigel. The snow in the Balkans put a stop to the Russian invasion.

Thus the sanguine hopes based on the "Army of Relief" were shattered; for the second time in the campaign Mehemed Ali turned out a bitter disappointment. The relief of Plevna became henceforth an impossibility with Gourko's corps placed like a barrier between the besieged and outside help. In these expeditions Gourko acted in contravention of Todleben's plans; but success justified his venture.

We in Plevna never knew the worst, and up to the last day we watched and waited for the appearance of the promised relief, with a longing and a heartache which it is difficult to describe. How acutely a brave and clever man like Chefket, hitherto supreme in Orkanyé, and as such eminently useful, now playing second-fiddle to Mehemed Ali, must have felt his inability to come to the assistance of his chief and friend, Ghazi Osman, who was slowly spending the life-blood of his army, the flower of the nation, without a finger being raised to help him in the hour of need—him who had upheld the honour of his country in a manner to place him on a level with the grand heroes of ancient Greece! Verily, Osman reveals to us

a glimpse into a tragedy of awful grandeur. What this man must have felt at the end of November and in the terrible first nine days of December it is impossible to realise. Alone he stood upon the pinnacle of glory which his own genius had raised, while the storms of fate shook and undermined it; not a hand was stretched forth to assist him; at a safe distance his countrymen spent their energies in idle promises, voluble protestations, petty squabbles, useless, long winded, never-ending preparations; and the world looked on amazed, with the daily repeated question: "How long will this last?"

A combined division under the Roumanian Colonel Slanitcheano seized Rahova on November 21, and Lom Palankah on November 30. The weak Turkish garrisons retreated to Widdin, that of Rahova having lost 500 men in killed and wounded out of 2000. In Widdin, Mehemed Isset Pasha, its commander, prepared for the siege, which was commenced by three Roumanian divisions on December 20, to end only with the armistice on February 3, 1878.

I shall now return to the chronological order of my narrative. Between November 1 and 4 there was silence along both lines. On the latter date the Russians commenced shelling in the west, which continued up to the 9th. After dusk on that day the Russians, led by Skobeleff in person, delivered a violent attack upon our south front, especially against Haji Baba and Ghazi Osman Tabiyas, the Brestovitz redoubt, and Kütchük and Yunuz Tabiyas; this was repulsed after furious fighting lasting till midnight. This was the most serious engagement during the investment. The Russians lost 600 men, we 200.

On the following day the enemy renewed the attack on Yunuz Tabiya, and was again unsuccessful.

During the night between the 10th and 11th Ghazi Osman Tabiya was violently, but vainly attacked. The action lasted till two in the morning.

On the 11th there was heavy shelling along the whole line. We anticipated a general assault, but were disappointed.

On the 12th Skobeleff again attacked Ghazi Osman Tabiya, and was beaten off.

On this day a *parlementaire* arrived in Ibrahim Tabiya and summoned Osman to surrender. The latter sent a spirited reply. The correspondence was circulated among the officers ; here it is :—

"Quartier Général, Porodim :
"le 30 Octobre, 1877
(Russian date).

"Monsieur le Maréchal,—J'ai l'honneur de communiquer à votre Excellence les faits qui suivent ci-dessous :

"Les troupes Ottomanes de Gorna Dubnik et de Telish ont été faites prisonnières. Les armées Russes se sont emparées des positions d'Osikovo et de Vratza. Plevna est entourée par l'armée de l'Ouest, renforcée des corps de la garde impériale et des grenadiers ; les communications sont coupées ; on ne doit plus compter sur aucun ravitaillement. Au nom de l'humanité, et pour éviter une inutile effusion de sang, dont votre Excellence portera seule la responsabilité, je vous invite à cesser toute résistance, et à designer un endroit où l'on puisse traiter des conditions de la capitulation.

" Veuillez accepter, Monsieur le Maréchal, l'assurance de ma très-haute considération.

" NICHOLAS,

" Commandant-en-chef des armées
" Russes en Europe.

" A son Excellence le Maréchal
Osman Pacha à Plevna."

" Quartier Général près de Plevna :
" le 12 Novembre, 1877
(Western date).

" J'ai reçu la lettre datée le 30 Octobre que votre Altesse Impériale a bien voulu m'adresser.

" Les troupes impériales, placées sous mon commandement, n'ont pas cessé de faire preuve de courage, de constance et d'énergie. Dans tous les combats livrés jusqu'à ce jour elles ont été victorieuses ; pour cette raison Sa Majesté le Czar s'est vu forcé de faire venir, comme renforts, les corps de la garde impériale et des grenadiers. Les défaites de Gorna Dubnik et de Telish, la capitulation des troupes qui s'y trouvaient, l'interruption des communications, l'occupation des grandes routes, ne sont pas de raisons suffisantes pour que je sois forcé de rendre mon armée à l'ennemi. Rien ne manque à mes troupes et elles n'ont pas encore fait tout ce qu'elles doivent faire pour sauvegarder l'honneur militaire Ottomane. Jusqu'aujourd'hui nous avons répandu avec joie notre sang pour notre patrie et pour notre foi ; nous continuerons à agir ainsi plutot que de nous rendre.

" Quant à la responsabilité du sang versé, elle tombe en ce monde, ainsi que dans l'autre, sur ceux qui ont provoqué la guerre.

" Je présente à votre Altesse Impériale l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.

" GHAZI OSMAN,
" Commandant de l'Armée de Plevna.

" A son Altesse Impériale le Grand
Duc Nicholas à Porodim."

The sentiments expressed in Osman's letter in such noble and dignified language were endorsed and applauded throughout the camp.

To the six Cossacks who had escorted the *parlementaire* an ample repast was given, in order to impress them with the wealth of our stores; whilst their principal was hospitably entertained in Araba Tabiya.

I think it was on this day (November 12) that Osman transferred his headquarters permanently to a small private house in the centre of Plevna, having, since the September battle, oscillated between the encampment on Headquarters Hill and the town. But the former was kept up till the last; the tents were replaced by huts; one of Osman's staff was constantly in attendance, and the wire connected his hut with Osman's office in town.

Osman lived alone; his staff officers lodged in adjoining houses. His domestic establishment consisted of three men from an Anatolian regiment, to whose district his native town, Tokat, belonged. One acted as valet, one as cook, one as groom, gardener, and " odd job " man. The clerical staff consisted of two or three infantry kiatibs (clerks), and two or three captains and lieutenants from the three companies of engineers attached to the army; and I believe it was the Lieut.-Colonel in command of the latter, Tiflik (or Tiftik) Bey,

who served as Chef de Bureau; also, some N.C.O.'s from a Smyrna regiment, who acted as telegraphists.

The headquarters guard consisted of a battalion of volunteers of the Ottoman Union (a recent patriotic movement) and a squadron of mounted volunteers from Vodena (near Monastir), 800 all told. These volunteers were eager and enthusiastic, but untrained; the foot soldiers were docile enough, but the fierce Vodeniotes were apt to get out of hand. They furnished a small guard for Osman's house, which camped in the garden. Towards the end, when the Circassians had disbanded or deserted, the Vodeniotes acted as orderlies. Osman's pet was the Saloniki cavalry regiment; he liked to have it near him; hence much jealousy, the Salonikians and the Vodeniotes sometimes coming to blows.

Outside duty, Osman lived a retired life; he visited little and received few visits. I believe that Hussein Bey, the Commandant, and Acting Civil Governor, of Plevna Town, who had good quarters in the Konak, was the only person whom he honoured sometimes with a call. So far as I could ascertain, Osman's guests at his frugal meals were, occasionally, this Hussein Bey; the Tiflik Bey already mentioned; Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey, the commandant of the Headquarters Guard; Hassib Bey, the Surgeon-in-Chief, who was also Osman's own doctor; and an imam (chaplain) whom he had known in former days; rarely, Talahat, his personal aide-de-camp, Adil, for whom he had a great veneration, and the German surgeon Kuhle; the latter was, I believe, the only non-Turk with whom Osman exchanged courtesies during the campaign.

Osman used to frequent occasionally in those days

the better Bulgarian wine shops (only, however, to drink coffee) and talk amicably to the Bulgarian farmers and traders, whom he addressed habitually as dostlarim (my friends), or shehirdashlarim (my fellow townsmen), sometimes even as sevghili arkadashlarim (my dear comrades); this made a good impression. Osman was as much liked by the Christian Plevniotes as any Turk can be liked by Bulgarians. Several times, in subsequent years, he was invited by the Plevniotes to visit them and receive some present or testimonial or souvenir; but he could not obtain the Sultan's sanction.

A small café-chantant, not of the best repute, open all night and every night, was once or twice honoured by Osman's presence, much to the disgust of myself and scores of other young lieutenants, who, whenever duty took us to town, spent an hour or two within its hospitable, discreet, and none too scrupulous walls.

November 13 was an extremely cold day, the severest we had as yet had, with thick fogs. At night Yunuz Tabiya was again unsuccessfully attacked, for the last time; for from this moment Skobeleff gave up all idea of taking the work by storm. The Russians lost 500 men in the action, the Turks barely 100. I understand that the various attacks of Skobeleff's corps had been undertaken in contravention of Todleben's orders, many of them probably because, with the proximity of the hostile lines and the eagerness of the troops on both sides, engagements could not always be avoided.

On the 14th there was shelling along the whole line, so violent that we took it to mean the commencement of another general assault, and made our preparations accordingly. To our disappointment, none

took place. At midnight, however, Ghazi Osman Tabiya was unsuccessfully attacked. The fight lasted till daybreak, and cost the Russians 400 men. This was the last of the actions in this quarter. This fight, and that of November 10 to 11, were the only two night attacks delivered by the Russians during the campaign.

The total of casualties arising from the eight infantry engagements fought around Plevna during the first half of the investment (October 27 to November 15) was: Turks 1000, Russians 2300. The Orkanyé road engagements are not included in these figures.

With November 15 ends the first period (one-half) of the investment, which is of a character quite different from that of the second; for it embraces a number of minor infantry actions, whereas during the second half there was inactivity on both sides, with only one interruption—the engagement at the Vid bridge on December 8. The shelling also partook of the general characteristics of the two periods: it was severe and spasmodically violent in the first, lax and desultory in the second.

As regards my personal adventures during the first half of the investment, the record is a blank. Our wing was not once attacked; my redoubt received very few shells; my battalion had no fighting to do. Twice we were sent to Bash Tabiya, for twenty-four hours each time, coming and going in the middle of the night. The first time (October 30) there was a violent exchange of rifle-fire between the trenches of Bash and Kanli Tabiyas—much ado about nothing, as the men of both sides were in splendidly covered positions. The second time (November 10) the soldiers concluded an unofficial cessation of hostilities for six

hours, and I had a long conversation and a smoke with an affable Roumanian lieutenant. The pretended purport of this strange armistice was the burial of some men who had fallen the day before; but as this task was completed in less than an hour, it is probable that the real motive which prompted the Roumanians was that they were getting tired of the petty slaughter constantly going on in the neighbourhood of the two redoubts. We Turks had nothing to lose by such an arrangement; but I believe that my major received a reprimand for giving his sanction. While I was chatting with the Roumanian (I remember that he told me some stories or jokes with equivocal meanings, the latest importations from Paris) the men followed the example of their betters—talked to each other in snatches of broken Turkish or by comical gestures and signs, consumed biscuits together, and exchanged commodities. Presently other officers joined us; there was quite a conversazione, and a common meal, for which mother-earth had provided a thin white tablecloth; and many a hearty laugh went up to the sullen, snow-pregnant sky—laughs that, despite their sincerity, had a mocking ring in my ears. The whole scene was most curious, and strangely at variance with the established notions of warfare.

The service in Bash Tabiya was the severest and cruellest in camp—so severe that lately the two battalions which now formed the guard of the redoubt had to be relieved every twenty-four hours. No man alive could have stood for more than a day such exposure, such a strain, with the enemy's foremost sentries only the width of a road removed from ours—both in their holes, looking like a winter crop of heads growing in devastated fields. The battalions of the First Division

took turns in garrisoning the redoubt, two at a time; a regular order of service had been established. Owing to the merciless fire to which the unprotected approaches to the work were exposed, the relief of the redoubt guard had to be effected under cover of darkness. Domestic service, such as cooking, washing, &c., was impossible under the hail of shells and bullets. The men lived on biscuits or maize-bread, and melted snow; when there was no snow there was no water, and the troops had to depend upon that which they had brought with them in their flasks. The superior officers of Adil's division took turns of twenty-four hours each in the command of the redoubt. So dangerous was the service that a man commanded to Bash Tabiya bade farewell to his friends and made his peace with God. Every hour claimed its victims, except when the troops concluded unofficial armistices, such as I have described. These periodical cessations of hostilities grew more frequent as time went on: there were three or four a day, lasting from thirty minutes to two hours each, which were utilised on both sides for exchanging sentries.

Towards the middle of November the friendly intercourse between Roumanians and Turks became so notorious, in both camps, that the Russian leaders resolved to relieve the Roumanian garrison of Kanli Tabiya by Russian infantry. This took place about November 18, and after that there was no more truce, either official or unofficial, although on both sides the soldiers generally abstained from firing upon relief parties, as well as upon the foremost sentries.

We had the satisfaction of knowing that we made sojourn in Kanli Tabiya well-nigh unendurable. Roumanian prisoners described the place as a perfect hell.

Every gun within shell range was trained to bear on it, and with the abundance of ammunition, the fine quality of our Krupp guns, and the smartness of our artillerymen, I would rather have been on the brink of an active crater than in the Bloody Battery.

Conversation between the sentries, whom only twenty-five yards, or less, separated, was going on continually, as most of the Roumanians understood a little Turkish.

On both sides all sorts of devices were resorted to in order to deceive the enemy. We had a set of life-sized, fully clad figures—officer, bugler, ensign, privates, all complete—to attract the hostile rifle-fire. Some had movable joints. On the afternoon of the day on which I was in Bash Tabiya, when the truce had lapsed, we gave the Roumanians a kind of Punch and Judy entertainment, to a horrible accompaniment of drums, cymbals, tin whistles, and bagpipes. They returned the compliment after dark in the shape of a skiagraph performance, on a huge sheet with a fire burning behind. A little drama enacted between the shadows of a thin man and a woman of monstrous proportions made us laugh heartily.

The sentry service in our own redoubt, as well as throughout camp, was of a cruelly severe character in the rigour of a Bulgarian winter. The original four hours had to be reduced to two, then to one hour. Fixed, almost buried alive, in a hole four feet deep, with the upper part of the body exposed to the bitter blasts, the lower embedded in the frozen ground, unable to move (the slightest attempt at a trot, the very act of stepping out of the hole, attracted the enemy's bullets), insufficiently fed, compelled to exercise a ceaseless vigilance, struggling against the

dangerous drowsiness engendered by frost, the men looked upon sentry-duty as the last refinement of torture.

By the beginning of November the rations had already been reduced, more particularly as regards meat. Bread made of maize-meal, and baked in Plevna, took the place of biscuits, the large stock of the latter commodity being retained in view of a possible sortie and a march across a famine-stricken country. The total absence of alcoholic beverages and the diminutive quantities of meat made us feel the cold intensely. This grew worse later, when there was no meat at all and the rations became well-nigh insufficient to keep body and soul together. The slaughter of horses or cart-oxen was strictly forbidden ; offences were committed in this particular, although such instances were rare. Forage ran short, and the poor beasts suffered severely. The neighing of the horses, and a peculiar groan uttered by the oxen, were almost like articulate language.

On November 16 a horse had been killed in my redoubt which had broken a leg on the slippery ground. I partook of a portion which a well-disposed private offered to me. It was insufficiently salted and brought on violent diarrhœa, with spasms and agonising pains. Once more I was packed off to town in a cart and transported to the hospital in the mosque, where I spent eight days of unutterable miseries, among 400 fellow-sufferers.

There was a deficiency of drugs : quinine was almost entirely absent. Lint was wanting : garments had to be cut up for bandages, however much clothing of every description was in demand. Linen rags were treasured as priceless. During the last few days of

the investment wounds could not be bound up afresh for want of material. The doctors and surgeons were so overworked that they could not give the necessary attention to individual cases. Invalids quarrelled and even fought for precedence. Doctor Lange told me, on December 9, that he had not taken off his clothes for four weeks, and had had no more than three hours' sleep per night.

Of what the wounded and the sick suffered I was to have a taste during my second sojourn in the mosque ; and it must be remembered that things in the middle of November were not nearly so bad as they became in December. My first experience in this purgatory had been horrible enough ; the second simply baffles description. I contemplated suicide. On the fourth day Jack Seymour, also stricken down, joined me, and we upheld and comforted each other. Doses of brandy and some opium preparation brought me round sooner than the doctor had expected, and on the ninth day (November 24) I returned to my redoubt, during a snowstorm, on a creature, borrowed from a Circassian, so miserably lean that it had almost lost the shape of a horse, which broke down when I had got as far as Yeni Tabiya, and was immediately pounced upon, killed, and cut up by the soldiers of this work. I had to tramp, or rather crawl, the rest of the way, and fell down twice : for the diarrhœa had left me exhausted, and the frozen slopes rendered locomotion difficult to even the strongest. The second time I made, in my misery, no effort to get up, praying for deliverance, with the flakes whirling around me and threatening to bury me alive. Some men found me, and took me to my redoubt. Tereb had meanwhile commanded the company, being the only active officer left ; for

—so I heard to my grief—Lieutenant Azif had been killed in the trenches of Bash Tabiya. I begged Ibrahim, tired to death by his manifold duties, to retain the command until the following day, lay down on my primitive couch, and slept for sixteen hours, tormented by ugly dreams, cold, hunger, and evil forebodings. A young private of my company nursed me with a mother's tenderness. The men were fond of me, of which fact I had a striking proof on the following day, when they made up an abundant meal for me—each contributing a mite of his dinner—consisting of maize-porridge, bread, a few biscuits, and a little boiled mutton, the last meat I tasted during the campaign. This repast, added to my own ration, with some brandy obtained from my girl-friend in town, restored my strength to a wonderful degree, and next morning I resumed command of the company, much to Tereb's relief, who had not slept for forty-eight hours. He fell with fatigue, and had to be carried to his sleeping-quarters. From this day until the night after the surrender—fifteen days—I never took my clothes off.

Whilst I was in the hospital the report of the fall of Kars had spread through the town like wildfire, penetrating even to the fever-haunts. I learnt now that on November 27 the Russians had affixed placards on poles in front of the Turkish redoubts, which, taken down by our sentries, were found to contain the following inscription in ungrammatical, ill-spelt Turkish :—

"Kars has been taken, and Moukhtar Pasha's army has surrendered. You are surrounded on all sides, and cut off from every possibility of escape and succour. Your Sovereign wishes to make peace;

it is only Osman Pasha who retains you here. Surrender, and preserve your lives for your families. If you do not, you will die of starvation. You have done your best, and nothing more can be expected of you."

On the same day the Russians had fired artillery volleys, and had, after dark, huge illuminated inscriptions in some of their redoubts, setting forth in French and Turkish that Kars had fallen.

Jack did not join us until the beginning of December. He fell ill in the redoubt the evening of his arrival, and I nursed him throughout the night. His head rested on my arm for many weary hours. I thought it was all over with him; but towards morning he quieted down, and slept profoundly until noon, when he awoke much refreshed. The soldiers made up a goodly meal for him—without meat, however, as we had none—and he recovered, and became quite strong and cheerful.

The town was one vast hospital in those days. Every other house had been transformed into an ambulance; each mosque and public building was filled with fever-stricken men. There were 8000 invalids in a town built to accommodate 17,000 inhabitants; in December the number increased to 10,000. The Turkish residents behaved very well, giving every assistance in their power; some of the women even abandoned the restraint placed on them by custom and religion, and tended the sick.

That business had long since come to a standstill needs no emphasising. The inhabitants were rationed, like the soldiers. At the end of November two shops were open out of over a hundred; on December 8, none. On November 30 the last Turkish café and the last Bulgarian wineshop put up the shutters. The

two inns had done so weeks before, and the buildings were utilised by the soldiers ; the great Khan had been military storehouse and stables since the second battle. And when, on December 2 or 3, the Café Chantant held its last doleful performance, then we knew that, in deed and in truth, the end was come.

The deterioration in the value of money was a striking feature. For instance, in playing at domino, or with improvised dice, or other games, we used to stake biscuits, and the biscuit-stake was considered equal to ten piastres (1*s.* 10*d.*). Even quarter-biscuits were gambled for. The stakes were consumed as soon as won.

By the beginning of December my company was reduced to ninety combatants, including three officers (Seymour, Tereb, and myself).

The interment of those who died in the hospitals became a matter of such importance and magnitude that a special service had to be organised for this work.

I have already said that meat was not dealt out after November 25. Towards the end of the month the rations were reduced further, and up to December 6 we had for our daily sustenance a quantity of unpalatable maize bread equal to ten ounces, and a small portion of thin maize gruel, tasting sickly on account of the absence of salt. Thus a meal smaller than the average Briton's breakfast had to do duty for a whole day. Tobacco had run out long since, and when my girl-friend procured me a couple of cigarettes, I cut them in halves and gave Seymour, Tereb, and Bakal a piece each. Of tea there was, I believe, not an ounce in town or camp ; in fact, from the time of my last visit to Widdin, when Doris had given me a cup, up to the evening of the surrender, when the Russian

officers treated me, I saw none. Coffee there was none—at least, none for us, though it was said that the superior officers still received occasional doles. A friend of mine got hold somewhere of a minute quantity, and dealt out his treasure in spoonfuls. A cup of coffee would have fetched almost any price; but then, money was quite as scarce as most commodities. In my redoubt I was, I believe, the only man, except the brigadier, who possessed cash.

Firewood was entirely absent. In the southern and western sections of the camp the vine and the fruit-trees were dug up and used as fuel, having hitherto been protected by the Mushir's order; but necessity knows no master. Shrubs and branches were sent to us now and then; these, with dried grass and herbs, maize straw, pieces of furniture, boards taken from the sleeping-quarters (at a sacrifice of safety and comfort), demolished articles of any description as long as they were of combustible material, and nondescript rubbish, with, now and then, a cart surreptitiously broken up, constituted our fuel. Sometimes we could not make our maize porridge because we had no fire. Once or twice Bakal, more indefatigable than ever, whose wits seemed to increase in proportion to the difficulties, procured for the battalion a few buckets of atrocious coal; but there were no stores and no regular distributions of this article. Coal was not (and is not now) a staple fuel of Bulgaria, which is rich in trees. Sentry-stalking was not countenanced, being considered cowardly and brutal; but one night some Circassians attached to my redoubt crept up on their stomachs to the enemy's sentinels, stabbed several, one after the other, and carried away from an outpost a number of faggots and large blocks

of wood, when we had a fire that was for days afterwards the talk of the camp. Turf or peat was cut for fuel, but proved a failure.

Soap we had not; I washed myself with soft clay. With candles we had to be extremely economical; frequently there was no material for artificial light. Matches were so scarce that to light fires cartridges were exploded. The only commodity which was abundant was ammunition, and that we could not eat, although some extraordinary things were consumed.

The vagrant dogs died by the score. Wolves showed themselves in the neighbourhood. Crows and ravens were shot, and much prized as delicacies.

Our garments were in tatters; only the great-coats retained the semblance of human clothing. The stock of uniforms and under-clothing in Plevna had been exhausted by the end of November. All sorts of devices were resorted to in order to add to the rags that covered us: garments were made up of skins, paper, sacking; straw and dead leaves were stuffed into cushions and fastened around the body. Happy he who could procure a woman's skirt or petticoat; the inventive skill born of necessity soon transformed it into a jacket or a vest, or even a pair of breeches. The costumes of some men included half a dozen articles of female attire; the very trousers worn by Turkish ladies were not disdained. Many garments presented a curious conglomeration of colours and materials, with but the faintest indication of the original stuff remaining under accumulated repairs. Russian and Roumanian uniforms taken from corpses were much sought after; many a Turkish great-coat concealed a complete set of these. The boots would hardly hold together; they were stitched, and mended, and stitched

again, until one could not tell where the original material ended and the patching commenced. Hides were made up into footgear of grotesque shape and uncomfortable wear. Happily, I had the boots I had brought with me, of which one pair was still in tolerable condition. Socks were almost entirely absent; rags were wound around the feet.

The *camaraderie*, kindness, and general good-fellowship which obtained among both officers and men were beyond praise. Quarrels were few and far between. Even in direst adversity order and discipline suffered little. The Draconic orders issued from headquarters during the second half of the investment were hardly ever called into play; but they made the troops feel that an indomitable will directed and an iron hand governed them. Cases of disobedience and disrespect were rare; of open disorder, conspiracy, or premeditated rebellion there was not an instance. Where an officer was popular with his men they followed his orders and advice blindly, and, in return for a little consideration and thoughtfulness, they would display great unselfishness and self-sacrificing kindness. But we had some deserters now; there were two in my company, both recruits who had been incorporated in it after the second battle. The Russian reports of wholesale desertions are fabrications. There were—Circassians excepted — not more than 200, all told, from first to last; that is, an average of three per battalion in four and a half months, say one per thousand per month. I believe that not a single man deserted among those who had come with Osman from Widdin; these, the Servian veterans, clung to their beloved leader with unbounded confidence and devotion. The Circassians deserted

wholesale—disbanded, in fact: of the twelve squadrons which we had on October 24, there were on December 10 not more than 200 men left. These gentry were looked upon throughout camp with the utmost contempt and distrust, and were given up as incorrigible. Not an officer but said from the bottom of his heart: "Would to God they had never formed part of the Turkish Army," to which they were a standing reproach, associating, as they did, brave, honest, and disciplined soldiers with a name that stinks in the nostrils of newspaper-readers: for it was they who gave rise to the Bashi-Bozouk *canards*.

Unfortunately, uncleanliness was rampant, regulations and penalties notwithstanding; but I presume that this vice is well-nigh unavoidable under such circumstances.

In spite of privation and suffering, the troops were full of courage and confidence, and positively more cheerful than they had been in prosperity, when the characteristic apathy of the race is more in evidence. One idea comforted and upheld us to the very last day: that the Army of Relief would soon arrive, and that then the Russians would have a beating of the first magnitude. How we watched and waited, and longed and hoped, and how ardently some of those Mussulmen prayed! I was told that the duty in the observatories in the southern redoubts was much sought after, because each man wanted to be the first to signal the advent of the deliverer. "Any news from Krishin?" "Have they seen smoke on the Orkanyé road?" "Have they heard guns in the south?" Such questions were asked daily times out of number. The camp-wires flashed anxious inquiries and disheartening replies to and fro. Many were the

false alarms, the bitter disappointments. "They must be here to-morrow—they cannot possibly tarry any longer," we said each hour; and the morrow came, and with it another day of dreary waiting, of uncertainty, anxiety, and sickening suspense. "Why do not the English help us? We have counted on them, and have been given to understand that they would assist us; and now they leave us in the lurch. Are they afraid of the Russians?" These questions were constantly asked.

During my illness there had been a few days' violent cannonade, the centre redoubts (Ibrahim, Omer, Atouf, Ikhtihat Tabiyas), the Opanetz redoubts, and the Vid bridge being the Russian gunners' objective. A perfect hail of shells had been directed against the bridge, but it was never hit. This is miraculous, considering that a few well-directed projectiles could have demolished the shaky stone structure of antiquated and picturesque appearance.

The cannonade ceased on the 20th, and from this date up to December 8 there was little shelling on either side, and no fighting.

Thrice more my battalion was sent to Bash Tabiya. The Russians were now in possession at the Bloody Battery, the Roumanians having moved the bulk of their forces westward, and directed their attention to the Opanetz redoubts, which they had shelled violently for a few days.

Nothing worth mentioning happened in Bash Tabiya. The hunting down (on both sides) of any man who showed the smallest discernible corner of his body went on as before, but no actual fighting took place.

The dates of my duties in Bash Tabiya were November 27 and December 3 (twenty-four hours each

time), and December 8 (four hours). On the latter day the Russians made an abortive attempt to surprise the Vid bridge guard. This was the only infantry engagement during the second half of the investment, and it was also the only attempt made by the Russians during the campaign to force the Vid passage. On the 8th there was little, and on the 9th no shelling.

Meanwhile the situation had become desperate. The Plevna camp was one vast cemetery, with the town for its central charnel-house. An army of 40,000 men was slowly dying of exposure, privation, and illness. The weather grew worse and worse; the cold became intense. The mortality was appalling. There was hardly a man who was not suffering from something or other—exhaustion, fever, dysentery, rheumatism, ague, bronchitis, galloping consumption, open wounds, frostbites, broken limbs. There were cases of small-pox, typhoid fever, diphtheria, even leprosy and insanity; there were deaths from starvation and exposure; there were even cases of that among Turks extremely rare event: suicide. Under these circumstances the fact that we were almost devoured by parasites seemed a trifle.

On one of the last days in November my major handed me copies of the *Times*, *Daily News*, and *Standard*, part of the contents of some parcels of newspapers which had arrived by *parlementaire* a few days before, some sent by the Grand Duke to Ibrahim Tabiya, others by Gourko to the Vid bridge. I was told that the Mushir had acknowledged these civilities with the remark that the papers would be found useful in the long winter evenings. I read that Kars had been taken by storm in the night of November 17 to 18; that Suleiman Pasha had tried vainly to

overthrow the barrier placed in his way by the Czarevitch's army; that Reuf Pasha was unable to force the Shipka Pass, and was condemned to idleness by the snow in the Balkans. It was clear that the Ottoman Empire was gasping in its death-agonies. Greedily, but vainly, I scanned the columns in search of any indication that England was coming to the rescue of her former ally. No, Britannia had her hands in her lap, and the British lion wagged his tail amicably and peacefully. Europe looked on in awe and wonder at the glorious stand made by the dying country. Russia, Roumania, and Montenegro had united to overthrow it; Servia and Greece were waiting to administer a few kicks to the fallen foe when they could safely do so; and not a hand was raised among the nations of the earth to help the country overwhelmed with misfortune; not a light shone into this awful darkness, except that which burned within us, and which death alone can extinguish.

In spite of all these disasters crowding upon us there was but one voice in camp: "No surrender." After nearly two months' virtual inactivity we longed for a goodly fight, for the fair chance of a battle-field; daily and hourly the necessity of making a supreme effort to break through the iron ring that held us in bondage became more apparent. We simply yearned for a battle; and this feeling increased in intensity when, on the last day of November, it became known that there was but a fortnight's food-supply left in Plevna, even with the present rations reduced already to the lowest practicable minimum.

On December 1 a council of war was summoned to headquarters, comprising all officers commanding divisions, brigades, and regiments. At noon on this

day our major called the officers of his battalion together, and told us that his colonel had desired him to ascertain our opinions on the following questions, which were those the council of war would be asked to decide :—

"Shall we remain in Plevna until food is exhausted, and surrender when there is nothing more to eat?" or

"Shall we make an attempt to force the lines of investment?"

Of thirteen officers, eleven answered "No" to the first, and "Yes" to the second question, whilst two replied in the reverse sense. Tereb and I voted with the majority. Seymour was still laid up; he joined us, I think, next day.

With this message our colonel departed to headquarters, and returned in the evening looking grave and gloomy. We learnt from the major that the council had arrived at no decision, and had adjourned until the following day; that Osman himself was in favour of a sortie, but that many officers shrank from taking upon themselves the responsibility of the frightful bloodshed which the action would engender.

"Let no man deceive himself," Osman had said, "as to the chances of success of such an attempt. They are infinitesimal. But I think that the honour of our country and the fair fame of our army render it incumbent upon us to make a last and supreme effort."

On the 2nd the council met again, and in the evening we learnt that it had decided unanimously in favour of the sortie. A protocol had been drawn up, and signed by all the members of the assembly.

Thrice more the council met (on December 3, 4, and

5) in order to discuss the details of the venture. There was much speculation in camp as to the direction in which the sortie was to be made, and when we learnt, on the 5th, that the Vid bridge had been decided upon we applauded the Mushir's wisdom.

It was the Mushir's intention—so we learnt—to cross the Isker at Mahulleta, proceed to Berkovitza, thence by the Ghintzi Pass to Sofia, and to join hands there with Mehemed Ali's army. Had the venture succeeded, the garrison of Widdin and those along the Servian frontier would also have concentrated in Sofia, where the Sultan would thus have had an army of 140 to 150 battalions at his disposal. Had Reuf Pasha's Shipka corps been united to this there would have been an army of 200 battalions, seventy squadrons, and 300 guns (100,000 men, three-fourths of whom were hardened and experienced troops) for the defence of East Roumelia, granted that Sofia had been abandoned, which was—so I heard—Osman's idea.

The reader can have no conception of the magic influence exercised upon the men's spirits by the prospects of action. Eagerness to fight and hope of success intoxicated us. We were cheerful, and even merry ; sick men recovered, aches and pains vanished ; it almost looked as if wounds closed of their own accord. The officers were enjoined to maintain the men in this condition by all the powers at their command, and conscientiously we did our best. Jack particularly was in a state of the wildest excitement, and his enthusiasm, boisterous merriment, and fine animal spirits affected us all. Ibrahim worked manfully and did his duty nobly, but he had to contend against a small, still voice whispering of death.

The sortie had originally been fixed for December 9,

but owing to a false report of the approach of the "Army of Relief" it was delayed for twenty-four hours. The Mushir's *Ordre du Jour* was given out on the 7th, with the date left open. On this day, as also on the two following days, in addition to our ordinary ten ounces of maize bread, full biscuit rations and the material for making a goodly portion of gruel were dealt out. Besides the food for the day, six days' biscuit rations were given to each man for the march. When the distribution of the biscuits to the battalions had been made the Plevna stores were exhausted.

These arrangements, and those I shall mention hereafter, necessitated a good deal of journeying to and fro. To deceive the Russians, who, like ourselves, had observatories on all prominent points, it was commanded that movements of troops, and also, as far as practicable, the marches of small detachments and trains, and even the journeys of single men, were to be made under cover of darkness. Five times I tramped to Plevna and back in those days, either at dusk or in the early morning, before sunrise. Gruesome journeys the latter were, in the bleak and ugly winter dawn, with snow on the ground and the cold air freezing your very breath. I could have borrowed a horse; but being now quite well, my legs were a good deal stronger than those of the half-starved brutes, and more reliable on the slippery ground. On each occasion I was met in Plevna by my girl-friend, who did me many an important service. At midnight, at three in the morning, in the early dawn—whatever the hour—she was at the place of tryst, and always had something to give me—a cigarette, a drop of brandy, a loaf. It would lead too far to enumerate the extraordinary ruses she employed to deceive her

father. She was cheerful, gentle, and a real comforter. It has been my lot to meet in Turkey two of the best specimens of true womanhood—one a Jewess, the other a Mahomedan.

The Turkish residents of Plevna were determined to accompany Osman on his retreat. Of the two evils—the dangers and hardships of a sortie and a forced winter march on one hand, and to trust themselves, wives, families, and belongings to the infuriated and uncontrolled Bulgarians on the other—the latter was by far the worst. The leaders of the Turkish community had several interviews with the Mushir; they had thrown themselves at his feet, and implored him with tears to save them from the Christians, who would be certain to display that murderous cruelty for which the rebellion of 1876 and the present war had rendered them notorious. Naturally, Osman had shrunk from hampering his army by a train of at least 500 families; but at length he had yielded to their pitiful appeal.

The girl's father had formed one of the deputation that had waited upon the Mushir, and from her graphic account I gathered that the scene at the first interview, when Osman peremptorily refused to accede to the request addressed to him, had been heartrending. Vainly Osman had pointed out that the man whose humanity had liberated the serfs in his own domains would not allow the peaceful inhabitants of a conquered town to be ill-treated; the fury of the Bulgarian mob, when once let loose, was too well known. All honour to the Mushir that he finally gave way, and consented to protect his luckless co-religionists, even at the risk of forging a chain for his own feet.

To ensure the safety of the worst of the wounded

and the invalids, whom it would be necessary to leave behind, the Mushir had summoned the priests and the elders of the Bulgarian community, and made them swear on the Bible and the crucifix that no outrage should be committed by the Christians upon the helpless inmates of the hospitals. The oath was solemnly taken, and violated, after the collapse of the sortie, in a manner for which no words of indignation could be sufficiently severe; almost all the sick and wounded were butchered.

I met this girl for the last time in the early dawn of December 9. Never shall I forget the utter desolation of the scene and the misery of that stolen interview. Imagine a town, which four months before had been one of the prettiest and most prosperous of the country, transformed into a gigantic overcrowded, neglected hospital. A wretched, utterly despondent, plague-stricken, ruined, starving town, where men called upon their Maker, in hopeless despair, to relieve them of their sufferings, whilst their children cried aloud in the agony of hunger, and women huddled together in tearless misery. Night and day knew no difference as far as the traffic of the streets was concerned; for the dead had to be interred at all hours, and the preparations for our sortie necessitated a constant feverish activity. So great was the mortality, that in families and households a death excited hardly any comment and little feeling. Barely a house but had its quota of sick or wounded soldiers; sheds, stables, anything with a roof to it, had been turned into ambulances; no attendance could be given, no medicine administered, no fires lighted; and gaunt figures, with hollow cheeks and desperate, burning eyes, sought for food among disgusting heaps of offal. Hideous diseases raged

unchecked, and did more ravage in a day than the Russian guns did in a week. To all the senses the town of Plevna was a savage abomination—to the sense of smell, by the stench of unclean fever hospitals, filthy, neglected streets, rotting carcases; to the hearing, by the sounds of agonising cries and groans on all sides; to the sight, because wherever your eyes rested you saw either the preparations for a last gigantic slaughter, or else the evidences of such miseries as only war can entail upon a populace that can have no manner of concern with the quarrels of those who have provoked it. The very air tasted of corruption; and whatever your fingers touched—shrubs, rails, walls—was covered with the slime of melting snow, like the cold sweat of anguish on the body of a nation decaying but still alive.

Misery and starvation notwithstanding, civil administration was carried on as efficiently as in times of peace, and continued so until the end. The inhabitants of either faith, and their belongings, were rigorously protected, excesses on the part of soldiers severely punished. Justice was administered, and its decrees executed, with severity certainly, but with an impartiality for which Osman, who was now also supreme civil head, and Hussein Bey, the Governor of Plevna, cannot be sufficiently praised. It speaks well for Osman's administration, that in a besieged and starving town, inhabited by a dual populace, and confessing to a dual faith, there was in seven weeks of investment never as much as a riot or any premeditated act of violence. The departure of the Turkish army handed the town over to the Christians—that is, to murder, outrage, rape, robbery, plunder, sacrilege, all of which throve exceedingly well under the Bulgarian interim

régime, until the Russians established something faintly resembling order two or three days after the surrender.

We met at a corner of the garden, where there was a dogs' kennel, the inmates of which had died of starvation, and, unburied, were sending forth a stench that attracted a crazy crew of carrion crows and croaking ravens. So ferocious were these birds in their disgusting greed that our approach did not disturb their ghastly labours. Some evergreen shrubs hid us from the soldiers who were continually passing in the street, with corpses bound up in scanty sacking—for there was no wood for coffins, and the raiment of the dead was always utilised—or with carts of arms or ammunition on their way to some redoubt. The sullen dawn of a winter day shed a ghastly, pale, colourless light, that gave to all things a hideously unearthly aspect, and with the snow-laden roofs and trees made the surroundings appear as if they belonged to another world. The sky was of a leaden grey colour. Snow had fallen during the night, but it was thawing now, and the snow became mud. There was an incessant dripping from the leafless trees, and on the ground the falling drops performed melodies like mocking funeral dirges. In the road, a shivering wretch in tatters was raking up a rubbish-heap in search of scraps of offal that might serve as food ; two little urchins, Bulgarians by their ragged garments, toddled through the slush, hand-in-hand, crying, but happy in the possession of a mud-begrimed crust, whilst a mangy cur followed them with hungry eyes and felonious intent ; and a woman, with an evidently dying baby at a breast that refused to yield sustenance, stumbled along, bewildered in her indescribable misery.

The girl had a cup of steaming hot sugared water,

with just the flavour of brandy in it, and a piece of bread. A window of the house was opened, and the ambulance assistant thrust out the bloody contents of a basin. I heard the peculiar grating sound of a surgical saw working its way through the bones of a leg or arm. We exchanged hurriedly the latest news, and then she had to leave me—and thirty-six hours later a Russian shell had sent her to her last account.

The evacuation of a camp and a march likely to last a fortnight involved an amount of preparation of which the lay reader can form no idea. During the five days between December 5th and 9th I was busier than I had been at any time during the campaign. I have nothing but admiration for the methodical and competent manner in which our preparations were planned and carried out. From first to last there was never a hitch. Every part of this huge machinery of wheels within wheels worked smoothly and efficiently.

Our preparations were so numerous and manifold that it is impossible to record, or even remember, them all. Of the food-supply I have already spoken. Here are the main features of our arrangements :—

The cash was distributed in equal parts, eighty liras to the battalion, if I remember correctly. I received seventy-five piastres (14*s*.). I had five liras of my own left.

Our standard was burned. Silently and reverently we watched the flames—which, for economy's sake, were utilised for cooking our porridge—devour the venerable rag that had preceded the battalion for fifty years, which had carried honourably the sign of the Crescent at Giurgevo, Silistria, Eupatoria, and Sebastopol, which had fluttered beside me in the bayonet-charge of the second battle, and in the treble assault

on Kavanlik during the September holocaust: 1828 to 1877—five decades of history consumed in less minutes. And as in sadness we scattered the ashes to the winds, we felt as if the Half-moon itself had fallen from its high estate, and was swallowed by the blast that, chilly and moaning, driving snowflakes and misty vapours before it, came to us from the dreary northern plains.

There being an abundance of arms in Plevna, and in order to diminish the quantity which we should have to leave behind (buried), the drummers, buglers, train-soldiers, and non-combatants generally, and also the gunners, received rifles. To some of the cavalry squadrons lances taken from dead or captured Cossacks were dealt out. To us officers were given Winchester repeating carbines.

Each man carried 130 cartridges, eighty in the pouch and fifty in the haversack. Each battalion had a reserve stock of 180,000 cartridges (or 450 per man, taking the average at 400 men per battalion), in 180 boxes of 1000 each. There were 300 shots per gun and two or three ammunition carts per battery.

Every rifle was taken to pieces, inspected, cleaned, oiled, tested. The bayonets were sharpened; the men had two each, one sword-shape, and one of the thin kind, as used at that time in most European countries.

For the transport of ammunition, water, forage, tents, tools, blankets, and baggage we had per battalion sixty packhorses and twelve carts drawn each by two oxen, with three oxen as reserve. The packhorses were in such an enfeebled condition that three-fourths of them could carry no more than two boxes of cartridges. The cart-wheels and those of the gun-carriages

were greased and bound up with straw, so as to render their action noiseless.

As the battalions which had come with Osman from Widdin had not brought tents with them, a redistribution of these was made, resulting in a share of thirty per battalion. A sufficient number of lanterns was dealt out to each company.

The remainder of the salt, sugar, and quinine was distributed, and in each company a few reliable men were appointed to carry and manage the trifling quantities of these articles destined for the men placed under them for this purpose. Boots were dealt out to those who needed them most—not new ones, but pairs taken from dead men or invalids. To each man was given a small quantity of linen rags, to serve as bandages for light wounds or sore feet. The sergeants and corporals had doses of ointment for the same purpose.

To protect the march of the army across the Vid a number of small fortifications had been erected in the rear, extending in a semi-circle east of the bridge; and two auxiliary wooden bridges had been built between the stone bridge and Opanetz.

From each battalion three officers were selected, with orders to make themselves thoroughly familiar with the roads and the country between town and bridges. During one of my recent visits to Plevna, on which I had been accompanied by two lieutenants from other companies of my battalion, we had spent several hours in the early morning in examining this neighbourhood, drawing rough plans, and making ourselves familiar with the surroundings, so as to be able to lead the battalion.

Lay figures were manufactured, dressed up, and

posted in the trenches and behind the parapet of the redoubt, so as to deceive the enemy.

All the wounded, save those whose feet or legs had been amputated or whose condition was hopeless, and all the sick, except those who were actually dying or who suffered from contagious diseases, were to accompany the army. The doctors in Plevna had their work cut out in making the selection. Those that could not walk—about 1000—were to be accommodated in carts; all that could keep themselves on their legs had to serve as drivers and escort to the huge train, and by this means the number of actual fighters was greatly increased. There were 6000 of these convalescent non-combatants.

Those sick and wounded who had to be left behind (800) were brought together in the largest houses of the principal streets, with a foreign surgeon, several assistants, and a number of convalescents to attend upon them, and ten days' biscuits to sustain them. We knew beforehand what their fate would be, in the hands of the Christian populace, during the time that would necessarily elapse between the departure of the Turkish and the entry of the Russian troops.

Three hundred carts were to accommodate the women and children of the Turkish inhabitants, the men acting as drivers. The officers of the Staff had to prevent the people from hampering themselves and the army by carrying furniture and lumber. In those redoubts which were to be abandoned the observatories were to be demolished, so that they should not be used by the Russians. For the same reason the telegraph-wires were to be destroyed. We had six lines, starting from headquarters, to Bash

Tabiya, Bukova, Opanetz, Yunuz Tabiya, Pertev Tabiya, and the Vid bridge redoubt.

The night of the 8th to the 9th was employed throughout the camp in packing the ammunition, forage, and baggage on the carts. The latter, with two-thirds of the packhorses, were to be sent to the hill immediately east of the Vid bridge, which was the general rendezvous for both the train and the artillery. This place was not exposed to the hostile shells. Most of the guns were to be sent thither at dusk (that is, starting from the redoubts between four and five), whilst the infantry, with the rest of the packhorses and the remaining artillery, was to leave the redoubts and take up position during the night. The commencement of the attack was fixed for daybreak on the 10th.

The troops were sanguine and enthusiastic. The full rations dealt out during the last three days had increased our physical strength; the prospect of activity was exhilarating, and the Mushir enjoyed such unbounded confidence that the common soldiers did not doubt the wisdom and ultimate success of our foolhardy venture. We officers did not deceive ourselves as to the very remote chance of success of such an audacious rush for liberty; but we were not despondent, and, far from discouraging the troops by giving utterance to our views, we did all in our power to maintain them in their present state of trustful courage. I in particular, having examined the Russian lines from the Vid bridge through my glasses, knew the attempt to be hopeless; but I kept my opinion to myself.

I came back from town at ten on the morning of December 9, and after having eaten part of my day's biscuit ration, with a few spoonfuls of hot gruel and

a loaf of bread, I packed up my belongings. The sketches, plans, notes, and diaries had increased so much in bulk that I was compelled to leave one-half of my manuscripts behind. My valise was stowed on one of the carts.

At noon the men began to harness the oxen and horses. One officer from each battalion, with a corporal and a squad, was to accompany the train. Our major, having been instructed from headquarters to send an efficient and reliable man, as there was a great pressure of work in town, was good enough to select me for this service. My orders were to see the train safely installed for the night, and to note carefully the locality of its bivouac, and then to place myself at the disposal of the commandant of Plevna town (Hussein Bey), leaving the battalion train in charge of the corporal. My rendezvous with the battalion was at six next morning, on the right Vid bank, close to the foot of the northern auxiliary bridge, the one nearest to Opanetz, which I shall call the Opanetz bridge, and which was 300 yards south of the junction of Vid and Grivitza. The major gave me a copy of the Mushir's *Ordre du Jour*, one of the special order issued for the battalion, and a plan of the neighbourhood. Seymour was to take charge of the company, and I was to resume the command on our meeting next morning.

Before starting I had my men drawn up, and addressed them with more fervour than logic and more confidence than grammar. They cheered me lustily, and cried " Allah Akbar " (God is great), and " Teslim yok " (No surrender). Then I made the round of the redoubt, and bade, silently and sentimentally, farewell to the place which had sheltered me for nearly twenty

weeks of dangers, privations, and vicissitudes. Well I remember the last glance I cast at the particular corner in which my couch had lain. Damp, dripping, draughty, bare and comfortless as it was, it had become dear to me.

We started at two o'clock, and being tired from my long tramp in the early morning and my ceaseless labours since, I rode the greater part of the way. The temperature stood at one or two degrees above freezing-point; on the roads and tracks there was deep mud, the hills and fields were white. The sky was overcast, and of that uniform murky grey which speaks of snow. It was clear with us, but there seemed to be dense fog in the vicinity of Grivitza. I had under me a corporal with twenty men (convalescents), forty packhorses, and twelve ox-carts. Soon other trains, similarly composed, joined us, and by the time we approached the town there was a seemingly interminable procession of vehicles and horses. We passed through Plevna without stopping. Here I noticed on all sides a boisterous activity; faces were flushed, and voices loud and merry with hope and excitement. As dusk set in we reached our destination, the top of a bare hill 600 yards south-east of the bridge, where there was already a vast encampment of carts and horses, protected by a few companies of infantry, and grouped around the battery which crowned the highest point. Half-way between us and the river, 200 feet below the summit, was the Vid bridge redoubt, strengthened for the sortie, and heavily garrisoned. Several battalions guarded the bridge itself, and beyond it, along the left bank, was a treble line of outposts.

The temperature had fallen; it was now freezing. The faint orange glow of the setting sun was reflected

in the quiet waters of the Vid ; behind me, in the east, dark clouds were massing. There was a hush in the air, but the stillness was of that unnerving and menacing kind which precedes a storm. The atmosphere was singularly clear in the west, murky elsewhere, oppressively so in the east and north-east. Whilst the tops of Plevna's highest domes and minarets were still illumined by the peacefully dying light of day the flakes began to fall lazily, ushering in the eventful night of December 9–10. The next rising of the sun was to decide the fate of the Plevna army, and with it that of the Ottoman Empire, was to mark an epoch in history, and to shape the course of European politics for decades to come.

CHAPTER XII

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SORTIE

December 9 *to* 10, 1877

The fall of Gorna Dubnik and Telish had reduced the strength of the Plevna army to seventy-two battalions, twenty-one squadrons, and eighty-eight guns, not counting the Circassians, whose number had meanwhile decreased to 200. The seventy-two battalions were of greatly unequal strength—varying from 150 men to 500, counting only those who were able to work. For the purposes of the sortie fourteen of the weakest battalions were incorporated with others, so that the battalions were of nearly equal strength, thus giving a total of fifty-eight battalions, each of 350 to 400 combatants. Hardly any battalion had its complement of eight companies, as many of the latter had been practically annihilated; generally speaking, a battalion mustered from four to six companies.

For the sortie the army was newly organised, being divided into two divisions, each consisting of three brigades of two regiments of four battalions each; and one unattached brigade, consisting of two regiments of five battalions each. The First Division was to do the actual fighting, by forcing its way into, and

through, the Russian camp, starting from the bridges, whilst the unattached brigade, acting as convoy to the train, was to cross the Vid with the latter in the meantime by the stone bridge and the middle bridge. The Second Division (to which my battalion belonged) was to act as rearguard of the general movement, occupying the fortifications recently erected east of the Vid; our right flank was to hold the Opanetz redoubts, considerably strengthened, and our left flank the redoubts in the south-west section of the camp. The Second Division was to follow in the track of the First (passing the river by means of all three bridges) as soon as the train had crossed and the First was fairly engaged with the enemy. The First Division was to take up position in battle order on the left bank during the night, and the train was to have crossed before daybreak.*

I have stated in Chapter XI. that at the beginning of November the Plevna army counted 40,000 men. At the final sortie its strength, including 7000 convalescents and wounded, amounted to 34,000; 800 of the worst cases among the wounded and invalids, and 200 convalescents, remained behind in Plevna; thus it follows that during November and the first nine days of December the army had decreased by 5000 men. Taking the number of deserters roughly at 1000 (200 regulars and 800 Circassians), it follows that 4000 men had died in six weeks, of which, say, 500 were killed in action or by shells, and 3500—nearly ninety per day—died from illness.

My battalion formed part of the Eleventh Regiment. It counted 360 file and fourteen officers, divided into four companies, and was led by Major

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

Taki, who had commanded it with success and distinction throughout the campaign. The adjutant was invalided. Our kiatib had left us early in November to do clerk's duties in Plevna in connection with the stores administration, and I do not know what became of him. Our surgeon was still with us, and was, I believe, the only medical man in the Sixth Brigade. Bakal was sergeant-major to the battalion, had the adjutant's duties to attend to, and was the major's right hand: up to the last he continued to be beloved and respected by all that knew him. My former captain commanded another company of our battalion. My company counted three officers (Lieutenants Seymour, Tereb, and myself) and eighty file, and was divided into two squads, commanded by Seymour and Tereb respectively. My colonel, Kazim Bey, had come with Osman from Widdin as major, had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel after the second battle, and was well known in camp as brave and clever. My brigadier, Edhem Pasha, had joined us just before the third battle; he had conducted himself very well in the September action, although compelled to play an inactive part; had gone to Orkanyé immediately after the battle by stealing at night through the enemy's lines; had commanded a brigade of Ahmed Hifzi's column during its march to Plevna, and behaved with great bravery in the various encounters which this force had to sustain with Krylow's cavalry. He had been wounded at Gorna Dubnik on September 22, when Krylow attacked Ahmed Hifzi's rear—led by him—and had recovered in Plevna.

The Sixth Brigade, to which I belonged, was called the Rear Brigade, and was destined to form the extreme tail of the army, with instructions to be the

last to cross the Vid. In the commencement of the action its station was to be at Opanetz.

The Mushir was with the First Division, and commanded its attack in person, Tahir Pasha being his second-in-command. Adil was in command of the Second Division.

I should like to have given my readers Osman's *Ordre du Jour*, as well as the special orders for the Sixth Brigade (mine) and the Eleventh Regiment (mine), which I possess *in extenso ;* but considerations of space render this impossible. One point, however, requires explanation.

In accordance with orders, my battalion should have taken part in Edhem's fight at Opanetz, in the extreme right flank of the *rear* of the Turkish army, whereas it, and another battalion of the same regiment, participated in the charge of the First Division, forming the right flank of the *front* of the army. This puzzled me greatly at the time ; for long afterwards I attributed it to an impulse of the moment, intelligible, in the circumstances, though indefensible, on the part of my colonel, Kazim Bey, who was with my two battalions till wounded. Only recently have I learnt that Osman, deeming, almost at the last moment, the flanks of the Charging Division too weak, instructed Adil, early on the morning of the sortie, to detach two battalions, a battery, and some cavalry from the right wing of the Second Division, to form the extreme right of the First Division. This will explain the unexpected position of my battalion on the right flank of the charging column. Similarly, two battalions and six guns were detached from the Convoy Brigade, to protect the left flank of the first Division. The exact strength of the actually charging

column was thus twenty-nine battalions, eleven squadrons, and forty-eight guns, or between 12,000 and 13,000 men.

In one other respect Osman's intentions were not carried out. The Twelfth Regiment never crossed the Opanetz bridge, but remained on the right Vid bank throughout the action. As will be seen later, this regiment did not behave well on the fatal day; so I have every reason to feel grateful that a providential circumstance prevented me from being with my own brigade in this battle. This is the only instance in the Plevna campaign that Turkish infantry did not come up to the highest standard of courage and efficiency. Unfortunately, the other two battalions of my (temporarily formed Eleventh) Regiment were involved in the disgrace of the Twelfth; but the critics must place to the credit of Edhem and his six defaulting battalions the contemptible ruse employed by the Roumanians, of which later.

The total strength of the Russian-Roumanian "West" Army (operating in Bulgaria west of Plevna) was in December, 204 battalions, 154 squadrons, and 694 guns; about 190,000 men; of this number 132 battalions, 66 squadrons, and 482 guns, about 130,000 men, formed the actual army of investment, in which Gourko's corps, which barred the Orkanyé road, is not included.

I return now to the record of my personal adventures.

When the battalion's train, of which I had charge, had arrived on the hill, I sought out a place for its bivouac which would at once be easy to find again, and which would not be difficult of access. I found a spot that answered to my expectations on the northern

slope of the hill, not far from the middle bridge. Here I installed the carts and the packhorses, caused the beasts to be unharnessed, and distributed the small quantity of forage which I had received in my redoubt for that purpose. Strolling in the neighbourhood, I encountered an urchin who carried two bundles of capital hay. I am sorry to say I deprived him forcibly of his burden; but my horses and oxen were much nearer and dearer to me than the goats or donkeys of some treacherous Bulgarian. I decamped with my booty hastily, leaving the little fellow sprawling on the ground, and in the darkness I heard his "boo-hoo" attract the attention of a patrol. The perpetrator of this shocking outrage was never discovered. Arrived at the bivouac, I had a fire made up, and having seen my men and beasts installed for the night, I walked to the town. A scanty snowfall was coming down lazily. The blackness of the night was lighted by sparse bivouac-fires. Gaunt, lean figures of men and beasts illumined by the flickering flames threw monstrous shadows. The men, although excited and eager for the fray, were quiet and subdued in voice and manner, for silence had been enjoined. This vast bivouac of carts and beasts, extending over an area of two or three square miles in a desolate winter landscape, associated with the idea of the dread morrow that would decide betwixt life and death, victory and defeat, liberty and captivity, impressed me gloomily and unpleasantly, and although I had no presentiments, I experienced a curious sensation, much like that which we feel at the approach of a thunderstorm, which turns the stomach and disturbs the digestion. The fringe of the bivouac was composed of the vehicles of the Turkish residents. A heterogeneous crew they

were, from the fat, rich trader, with his well-stocked harem, down to the lean, hollow-cheeked labourer with wife, child, and donkey; the men gloomy and preoccupied, the veiled women sobbing, the youngsters playing at hide-and-seek among the carts and the camp-fires. I felt deeply for these starving and shivering wretches, who had to leave their homes, their trades, their belongings, their all. I looked in vain for my little girl-friend, and concluded that her father's cart had not arrived yet. While I was in and near the train-encampment battalions and batteries arrived from all sides, in silence and in proper order, on their way to their appointed stations. In the places where the roads led through valleys, which places were hidden from the lynx eyes watching in the enemy's look-outs, fires had been lighted; wherever the paths or tracks lay within the hostile range of vision many nasty accidents occurred, as the feeble light of the lanterns failed to penetrate the dense moist atmosphere. It was a grand sight, all these thousands, eager for the last struggle, ready for a supreme sacrifice; they came out of the depth of the night into the brightness of the camp-fires in a seemingly endless procession, and vanished into the blackness beyond.

Arrived at the town I walked to the konak. An officer asked me to write out labels to be posted at the ambulance-doors in a certain street. By the light of a candle-stump I made a number of placards running thus: "Il n'y a que des blessés dans cette maison," surmounted by a cross.

Armed with a brush and paste-pot I turned bill-sticker, and affixed my handiwork to the doors of all the houses in the street appointed to me, twenty or more, which were exhibiting the ambulance-flag.

Anything more dismal than that deserted, nocturnal town, abandoned by all but dying and helpless men, and perhaps 400 starving Bulgarians families, in lieu of the four thousand happy households it had once contained, cannot be imagined. Desolate, dead, God-forsaken Plevna during the night of December 9–10 was no more like the thriving and pretty Plevna of July than the decaying corpse of an old hag is like the living body of a blooming girl in the full vigour of youth. The unlighted, empty streets, with here and there a slouching outcast, like a starving beast of prey on a hopeless search for a scent, or the swift, shadow-like passage of a woman huddled up under a coarse shawl; the dark and silent houses, many of them partly demolished, some wholly so; the ink-black sky above, and the night surrounding me on all sides like solid walls, unillumined by a single speck or gleam of light, save where the rays of my lantern thrust their narrow circle of feeble, flickering, pale yellow radiance; the metallic ring of my solitary steps on the frozen soil in this silence of death; with, to add an element of terror, occasional groans and curses proceeding from the interior of the ambulances, haunted me long afterwards as quite unearthly in their collective impression. Twice I stumbled over corpses which had been thrust into the gutter as the quickest way of getting rid of them. As I served in loneliness my dreary apprenticeship at bill-sticking, I had to shake myself and pinch my flesh, so much like the phantasy of an ugly dream was the scene to my mind. The very glue of the paste-pot smelt nauseously of corruption, and as I plied my brush on the door-panels I felt like one alone alive in a gigantic graveyard, writing lying epitaphs on an endless succession of headstones.

So pregnant was time with events big and small, but horrible withal, that my short service as bill-sticker to the Sultan's Plevna army brought me two adventures, both sufficiently unpleasant to impart to a man's existence, under ordinary circumstances, an element of the terrible and sensational that will last for weeks, but of which I took hardly any notice. Being bidden to enter, by loud voices within, one of the ambulances, I found, by the feeble light of a reeking oil-lamp, some invalids fighting for the possession of a remnant of half-rotten food discovered in a forgotten cupboard. Men without legs or feet, men with amputated arms or hands, men devoured by dreadful diseases, were clutching, scratching, kicking, dealing and receiving blows for something that your dog or cat, sir or madam, would consider itself insulted at being offered. I pacified them, and distributed the nauseous remnant in equal parts. They were like ghouls, and the scene might have figured in the "Inferno." As I turned to go a man without legs caught hold of me from his mattress, and begged me to carry him to the train-bivouac, so that he might accompany the army. Others knelt down, crying in their misery, imploring me to liberate them out of this hell. Happily, an attendant—himself a convalescent and hardly able to crawl—turned up, and I wrenched myself away. When I had finished my work I returned by a narrow lane where the darkness was absolute. Some one sprang upon me and tore the paste-pot away from me. I presume he had perceived it by the light of my lantern—which I dropped in the struggle—and thought the vessel contained food. I belaboured his face with the brush. He spluttered and croaked, swore and choked, and finally I rammed the bristles down his

throat. Presently he was joined by others, and I heard snatches of Bulgarian. Discretion being the better part of valour, I left my unknown and invisible assailants in possession of the paste-pot, and, wishing them a good appetite, I beat a hasty retreat towards the konak.

Here I assisted some officers and convalescents in packing up the archives and records. I have no exact notion of the time; I presume it was between ten and eleven.

Whilst we were engaged in storing the boxes and bundles on a cart, the Mushir and his Staff rode up, preceded by a mounted torch-bearer, and escorted by a small detachment of Saloniki cavalry. Osman entered the konak, where he remained closeted with Hussein Bey, the governor of Plevna, for a quarter of an hour. When he came out the light from the torch fell full upon his countenance. I had not seen him face to face since the September battle. His features were drawn and careworn; their expression was one of angry determination. He responded to my salute with that peculiar nod of his which was more a frown than a greeting. Having apparently forgotten something, he went back with Hussein to the house and sat down at the table in the general room, conversing with him in whispers. I took a chair at the other end, among some officers who were writing. When Osman rose, scowling a general farewell, we all went after him in the street, to witness his departure. A company of the battalion of Volunteers of the Ottoman Union had drawn up along the road, and a feeble band made a melancholy attempt at martial music. The Mushir mounted his fine Arab horse, bade farewell to Hussein, gave a last glance,

that looked much like a good-bye for ever, to the konak, and rode away, followed by his Staff, the cavalry, and the volunteers with the cart.

Osman and his officers spent the night in one of the farmhouses on the western outskirts of Plevna.

There remained now in town of active soldiers the Governor, with one or two subordinates; the surgeon who had been selected to stay behind (I think it was one of the Germans), with two assistants; 200 convalescents, to attend to and protect the invalids, and twenty officers who, like myself, had had some final arrangements to see to. The rendezvous for the latter, previous to rejoining their troops, was at the konak. Here they arrived before midnight, when we had a supper of gruel and bread, and having bidden farewell to those who had to remain behind, and who saw us depart with heavy hearts, we walked in a body to the train-bivouac. As we passed the last houses I said good-bye to Plevna.

The night was intensely dark. In lieu of the sky there seemed to be a solid low roof as black as pitch, whence descended a sparse shower of small snowflakes. The temperature was a few degrees below freezing-point. Some of us had lanterns, without the aid of which we should not have found our way. A thick fog hung over the valleys. The atmosphere was peculiarly oppressive to the senses. Such little conversation as passed between us was not of a cheerful kind; moreover, we were strangers to each other and had no subjects in common, except the one paramount interest attached to the morrow. Regarding this our discussion was the briefest on record, and can be summarised in these words: "It is all over with us." We were unanimous as to the chance of success and

did not expect to witness the next nightfall. When one is once thoroughly convinced that all is lost, arguments are thrown away; so we accomplished our tramp in gloomy silence.

The hush of death lay over the encampment of the train. Most of the fires were out. We parted company, as the twenty of us belonged to as many battalions. I and two other lieutenants from my brigade walked to a deserted hut on the river's brink; half-way between the stone bridge and the middle bridge, which I had noticed in the evening. It may originally have been a fisherman's shed. We reached it between one and two in the morning. It was stripped completely bare, every board, fixed or movable, having been used as firewood. However, we had a roof over our heads. Several officers from the Convoy Brigade had already installed themselves.

I wrapped my great-coat around me and lay down on the bare soil to snatch a few hours of rest, trusting to chance to wake up in time to join my battalion before daybreak. The door on the river-front opened on a dilapidated landing-stage, of which the rotten boards were trodden by a lonely sentry with clockwork monotony. I heard the waters splashing and murmuring, and every now and then a lump of ice floating on the surface dashed itself against the piles.

At this point the Vid has a width of 100 yards.

It was so foggy in the vicinity of the river that I had seen nothing of the First Division on my way to the hut; but as I lay there, too depressed to sleep, though tired to death, I heard on both sides the tramp of battalions, which continued up to five in the morning. The First Division was crossing, two brigades by the stone bridge, one by the middle bridge. I had brief

snatches of uneasy rest, and whenever the intense cold, or dreams born of mental misery, awoke me, the distant sound, uncanny in its monotony, roused me to consciousness. Sometimes there was the clatter of a prancing horse's hoofs on the hard ground, sometimes a subdued command ; and on went the tramp of thousands, cheerfully marching to their doom in obedience to the indomitable will of one man.

There was no shelling during the night.

At a little after five I awoke with a start from a hallucination of particular hideousness : I had dreamt that some awful ogre or ghoul, somebody or something unknown, but unspeakably terrible, cruel, and horror-inspiring, was trying to get in by the door. It was the step of the sentry, which had so unnerved me that I was shaking and bathed in cold perspiration. As my senses returned to me I listened in vain for the tramp of the battalions across the bridges ; there was silence now. Immediately afterwards a fresh sound struck my ears, that of wheels. " The train has commenced to move," said one of my companions, who had, like me, been listening. I lighted a match, and found that the officers from the Convoy Brigade had left us. We rose, and in the dark nibbled hurriedly some biscuits. Then we stepped out. It was intensely cold, and the night was pitch-dark. One of my comrades had a lantern, but its gleam shone feeble and ghostlike through the thick fog that hung over the river. Presently steps approached us : a small detachment which, by the light of a torch, collected the sentries posted along the river. From the corporal in command I learnt that the passage of the First Division had been effected in perfect order, without incidents or mishaps, and that the train was now well under way.

We walked along the bank northward, running at every step the risk of falling into the water. The ground was as slippery as a mirror, and the darkness absolute. Passing the foot of the middle bridge, we came within the light-circle of a huge fire, by the gleam of which a seemingly interminable procession of creaking vehicles and heavily laden horses was crossing. We wended our way with difficulty through the maze of carts, struck inland by a footpath, cutting off the river bend, and arrived at the Opanetz bridge without mishap, save that of continually losing the track in the darkness. Here an invisible sentry challenged us. We ascertained the positions of our battalions; I had the good fortune to be within a few yards of mine. Having bidden farewell to my companions, I reported myself to my major and resumed command of my company, exchanging a few hurried words with Seymour and Tereb. I learnt that the battalion had reached its destination at midnight without any incident worth mentioning, and had bivouacked on the spot where I had found it.

It was now about 6.30. A quarter of an hour later our colonel, Kazim Bey, rode up and spoke to the major. The command, "Form in columns of companies," was given; this was succeeded by the order to advance. Guided by men with lanterns (for it was still quite dark), we crossed in silence the shaky pontoon bridge, which quivered and creaked under our tread. A battery and another battalion from our regiment followed us.

Arrived on the left bank, we waited for dawn close to the bridge-head. When behind us, in the east, the first glimmer of the eventful Monday, December 10, imparted a greyish tinge to the hitherto deep black

mist, so that the nearest objects rose gradually into existence like spectres created out of nothing, we took our stations, one battalion facing north, its right flank resting on the river, the other (mine) facing west, its left flank joining hands with the extreme right of the First Division (which had meanwhile taken up its prearranged position for attack), the six guns in the right angle formed by the two battalions. Before the attack commenced the men of our linked battalion turned left, so as to face west as well as ourselves, without, however, otherwise altering their positions. In this order we followed, and participated in, the assault of the First Division.

My company formed the left flank of my battalion, and I was thus in touch with the First Division. I had my two squads in parallel lines: one (Seymour's), as skirmishers, in front, the other (Tereb's), as fighting line, thirty yards behind. As it grew clearer and lighter I could see on my left the line of attack, two miles long, of the First Division. Its extreme right was not more than fifty yards away from me.

The snowfall had ceased, and the mist cleared as the morning advanced; but the sun, veiled all day long, never shone upon the Last Sortie. The temperature rose to one or two degrees above freezing-point, and on the tracks and roads the snow was soon transformed into slush under the tread of the charging battalions.

An imposing sight was that long, straight line of the First Division as it gradually emerged out of the morning mist, extending as far as eyes could travel: twelve battalions in first line, with twelve companies of skirmishers slightly in advance; twelve battalions in second line, 100 yards in rear, with six batteries

distributed among the latter ; every man at his post, waiting but for the command to advance, every company in faultless order, the whole body ready in grand and solid battle array. Never has Turkey made a finer show of soldiers than with the twenty-four crack battalions of her First Division in the last sortie from Plevna. The dark hoods of the great-coats, drawn over the fezes and pointing upwards, imparted an element of grotesqueness to the appearance of the men, in fantastic contrast to the glittering files of sword-bayonets, of which the steel blades reflected the sombre grey hue of the snow-pregnant sky.

It was a glorious idea that all these thousands were animated by one thought, inspired by one wish : to do or die. Our last resource, our last appeal to arms, our last stake in the game, our last and supreme effort—and after that, come what may, we had done our duty. Hope, that Divine spark in the human breast, intoxicated us to such an extent that even we officers, although better informed than the men as to the true state of things, forgot doubts and misgivings at the sight of that grand array, and revelled beforehand in the sensation of success.

In front the Russian entrenchments rose out of the vapours, sinister and threatening, the barriers betwixt us and liberty ; beyond them the misty distance meant freedom, the end and goal of the stupendous struggle that was to ensue.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOURTH BATTLE OF PLEVNA, COMMONLY CALLED THE LAST SORTIE

December 10, 1877

As the lustreless grey morning light spread over the bleak winter landscape I took stock of the details of the scenery. In front of me was an even, bare, shelterless, gently rising plain, with two villages: Dolna Netropolié, two miles and a half to the right (north-west), midway up the slope; Gorna Netropolié, four miles ahead (west), on the summit. The nearest point of the Russian lines was 3000 yards ahead. The front line consisted of low earthworks; 500 yards in rear, on a higher level, were strong redoubts. On my right was the Bivolar reach of the river; on my left, the Vid plain, following the direction of the river-valley (south-west), extending to the confines of the horizon, and traversed by the bold line of the Orkanyé high-road. Behind me, beyond the Opanetz pontoon bridge, was the triangular-shaped little valley through which flows the Grivitza; the junction of this river with the Vid was barely 300 yards east from my standpoint. On both sides of the Grivitza Valley the hills were steep and high, concealing the town of Plevna and our former

camp from my view. Looking up-river I could see the middle bridge and the old stone bridge, over which the carts and packhorses were incessantly passing.

According to the Mushir's disposition the train should have finished crossing by daybreak; but delays are inevitable on such occasions, and it was nine o'clock before the last cart had passed. At this hour the whole of the First Division, Convoy Brigade, and train, were on the left bank, whilst the Second Division, with the exception of our two battalions, was on the right bank. The five batteries of the latter (excluding the six guns attached to my battalion) were posted on the slopes of the right bank, and commenced just after nine to shell the enemy's entrenchments ahead. The Russians responded, both in front and from the batteries near Dolna Dubnik.

At 9.30 our bugles sounded "Advance," and the whole line, two miles long, began to move, in one grand and solid body. Our colonel placed himself at the head of my battalion. We kept pace with the front line of the First Division. I was with the first squad, Seymour by my side; Tereb and his men were thirty yards in rear.

There never was anything half so grand as that impetuous rush for the hostile entrenchments. The men fired without stopping; we went at a quick pace, hurling a hail of lead before us. The troops repeated incessantly the sonorous Arabic phrase: "Bismillah-i-rahman-i-rahim," *i.e.* "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate"; from battalion to battalion the cry spread, the syllables kept pace with the step of the charging brigades, and in the end 10,000 throats sent the invocation up to the pitiless heavens in a grand and solemn monotone. In an

incredibly short time we had traversed three-fourths of the intervening space. The Russian infantry-fire tore deep gaps in our line; so murderous was it that the whole of the First Division, and we with it, came at length to a dead stop. The men in the front line went down on their stomachs. Some rearrangement was made in the First Division; but the powder-smoke was so thick that I could not clearly see what it was. The major rode up, and by his order I caused Tereb's squad to advance, so as to be forty feet in rear of the first squad. By this arrangement, and on such level ground, the company was kept well in hand.

Meanwhile the cannonade had become deafening. The six batteries of the First Division deployed in grand order, and soon every one of our eighty-eight guns hurled their projectiles against the Russian redoubts in front. There were several explosions among the train, and, with a beating heart, I noticed disorder in the long files of vehicles.

After an interval of ten minutes the bugles of the First Division sounded "Charge." The men jumped to their feet, and uttering our battle-cry we made straight for the nearest trench. A murderous discharge of rifle-fire greeted us. Half of the men of my first squad were down. Suddenly I became aware of a vacancy at my side. I turned back, and beheld Jack writhing on the ground, with hands on his breast, a dark stream staining his convulsively twisting fingers. Seeing me stop and turn he held out a hand to me, with a look in his eyes the like of which I hope to God I shall never behold again. In the mean time (all this took place in fewer moments than it will take the reader to peruse it) the first squad had advanced without me; the second came up and pushed me along. Tereb

shouted into my ear: "God have mercy on him!" and clutched my arm. Once more I looked back, but the smoke hid my dying friend. "It is all over with him," said I to myself; "a man with such a wound cannot live many minutes;" and I ran to catch up the front squad, my brain disturbed by a whirlwind of agonising thoughts. In an incredibly short time we had the first trench in our possession, then a second and a third, and before we knew what we were about we were amidst the Russian guns, hacking, clubbing, stabbing, using bayonets and butt-ends, swords and revolvers, whilst overhead hissed in both directions countless shells, like an infernal gale. The confusion was terrible; in the smoke one knew no longer who was friend and who foe. The din was deafening, and my voice, as I tried to cheer the men, was soundless to my own hearing. Such a crazy witches' Sabbath, such a boiling and seething mass of mad humanity, cannot be described.

My men, mixed with another company of my battalion, and with the squads on the extreme right of the First Division, were in the midst of a Russian battery of eight pieces. The enemy's gunners got their prancing, terror-stricken horses out, and succeeded in removing five of the guns; two others the Grenadiers dragged away by hand; one piece remained in our possession. We pursued, and found ourselves in a labyrinth of mud huts, every one of which was fought for and won. Finally we were clear of the Russians, having taken, along our whole front, the first line of their entrenchments. Five hundred yards ahead was a second, stronger line.

I collected my men, and found sixty of them. Not noticing Tereb, I inquired for him, and the corporal

of his squad pointed silently to a lifeless mass in a pool of blood a few yards away. It was he, lying on his face, with a bullet in his head and a gash in the shoulder. Two friends, companions in weal and woe for over eight months, gone in less than eight minutes; but at that moment I hardly realised the horror of the situation. It came home to me later in the day, and then I envied them. They died the most beautiful death that man can die, and fell, both, face to the foe.

I think that thirty minutes must have elapsed before the Russians commenced their counter-attack. In this interval of comparative quiet our two battalions manned the Russian entrenchments, and did what was necessary in order to place them in a state of defence by closing the open entrances at the back with carts, lumber, and dead bodies. Our right flank was not left unprotected, as our linked battalion placed itself *en potence*, facing north, just in time: for we noticed movements of troops in that quarter. The guns were installed behind the earthworks, and commenced to shell the hostile redoubts ahead. The Russian gun left in our hands had been rendered useless by a shell-splinter; we pushed it over an embankment, demolishing it completely.

We longed now for the advent of the Second Division (of which, up to the moment of the assault, only my battalion and that on our right had passed the river), which, according to the Mushir's plan, should have crossed by now. Vainly we strained our eyes; but we saw signs of fighting on the right bank, proving that our rear was pressed. In fact, by this time Plevna and the greater part of our former camp were in the enemy's hands.

From where I stood I could not see what was going on in the First Division. In its centre and left wing the fighting seemed to continue without interruption.

I was now the only officer left in my company; and of the seven non-commissioned officers who had originally belonged to it, only two were alive, not counting Bakal, to whom the major had given the command of another company, one that had lost all its officers. I made a rearrangement, placing the two squads, of thirty men each, under corporals. One was stationed behind the embankment, at the rear of the Russian works, facing west, towards the enemy's redoubts; the other was in reserve among the mud huts.

I closed Tereb's eyes, gave to his cold hand a last squeeze, and covered him with his great-coat. Bitterly I cursed the cruel fate that forbade my doing the same act of piety to the friend whom I had loved more than any I have had. But his body was a mile away from where I was, and I never looked at his handsome face again.

So far we had been victorious; but the worst obstacles were still unconquered: the formidable array of redoubts ahead of us.

So tired were my men, so heavily laden with cartridges, biscuits, and tools, amounting to half a hundredweight in excess of the usual burden, and so enfeebled by four weeks of privations, that, the first flush of victory over, their total exhaustion became apparent; hope and confidence vanished, and from this moment I felt that all was over.

I have no clear recollection of the events that followed. At eleven, so far as I can ascertain, the Russians attacked our right flank, a quarter of an hour

later our front also. For over an hour we held our positions successfully, in spite of terrific losses. In my company ten more men dropped; thus I had but fifty left. Our linked battalion suffered even more severely, being pressed hard by Russian and Roumanian infantry, and must have lost two-thirds of its strength.

Between twelve and one the action was again general and furious along the whole line. The dense atmosphere and the smoke prevented me from seeing how our First Division fared. The Russian shells came thick and fast. No order to advance and take again the offensive was given; it would have been useless against the huge masses opposed to us, for the enemy received reinforcements from all sides. Through my glasses I could see whole divisions coming up from the east.

At about one o'clock the major, who had meanwhile taken command of both battalions, Kazim Bey having been wounded, called me, and pointing to a Russian horse that peacefully nibbled the grass growing sparsely on the wall of a mud hut, said: "Ride to the First Division, find the Mushir, or in any case Tahir, report that we are pressed in our right flank, and that to hold out longer without strong reinforcements is impossible; obtain instructions, and see what is going on."

I placed the sad remnants of my company under the senior corporal, and rode off, along the rear of the front line of the First Division.

My impressions from this moment are confused. The first battalions which I passed seemed to be in good order and to hold out well; then I came across some where demoralisation had already set in, where

men were leaving the ranks and turning towards the river; finally, as I approached the centre—the fighting going on furiously and uninterruptedly all the time—I was drawn into the vortex of a most awful panic. The inevitable reaction after the brilliant initial success had set in, and the retreat, at first orderly, although not commanded, soon dissolved itself into a flight for safety—which every man foolishly and fondly believed he could find on the right river-bank, where, we knew, or imagined, the Second Division was still unbeaten.

I had never been in a general retreat, and I do not care to dwell upon it, as it is far more terrible than the most desperate encounter. I was simply drawn along in a mad stream of men, horses, and vehicles. Resistance to this torrent of panic-stricken humanity was as useless as opposition to the rush of the incoming tide. The officers of all degrees did their utmost to restore order and get their men to make a stand against the enemy, who did not by any means press hard; on this cold day their faces were streaming with perspiration, and their efforts were well-nigh superhuman, though useless withal. To make inquiries in this crazy crowd was out of the question. I simply had to follow the torrent. As far as my eyes could reach, all over the plain, there were countless streams of soldiers making for the two bridges. The train got mixed with the infantry and the batteries, and the confusion baffles description. All the time the shells flew into our midst, tearing deep gaps in the crowds. Several times did I escape splinters only by a yard or two. My horse slipped into a ditch by the side of the track, happily without injuring me, and I continued on foot. How I traversed the two miles which separated me

from the stone bridge I cannot say : the confusion in my memory is so great that to my mind the distance appears to have been only a few hundred yards.

Some battalions from the Convoy Brigade, fresh and in good order, thrust themselves between us and the enemy, and effectually checked pursuit ; but this I did not myself see ; I learnt of it later. Pertev Bey, the commander of the Thirteenth Regiment, was the man who thus distinguished himself ; he was badly wounded and, I believe, died soon after.

All that I could ascertain was that Osman had been wounded and carted across the river, by way of the Opanetz bridge, I believe. Tahir I never saw ; he was leading a forlorn hope somewhere on the Vid plain, and was, later, one of the last to re-cross the river.

The passage over the bridge was a most terrible affair, the like of which I have never experienced before or since. It is a miracle, to my mind, that this vast panic-stricken crowd of men and horses, this dense jungle of carts and guns, managed to get across ; but the fact remains that, with no more than two bridges available (the Opanetz bridge was utilised by only a few battalions, among them mine), the First Division, the Convoy Brigade, and the train—or what remained alive of these—were on the right bank before the Russian infantry was within a thousand yards.

It was only on the other side that the officers succeeded in stopping the retreat—not so much because there really was no other place to fly to (this the soldiers did not seem to realise), but because every one considered himself in safety with the river between him and the enemy, and the Second Division, thought to be still unbeaten, protecting the flanks and the rear.

As a matter of fact, Edhem Pasha, at Opanetz, had then already surrendered with his six battalions, having been deceived by the Roumanians, who, in summoning him to lay down arms, had told him that Osman had hoisted the white flag. Osman surrendered at least two hours after Edhem.

Arrived on the right bank, I pushed and fought my way through the now stationary crowd, in which the officers were restoring a little order and discipline, with a view of rejoining my battalion. In doing so I got among the vehicles of the Mussulman population. The pitiless shells soon followed us to this side of the river, and there were explosions of ammunition on all sides. The screams of the women were terrible, and unnerved many a sturdy man. Not in the most horrible dreams have I beheld anything half so frightful as this scene. I saw a demolished cart out of which had rolled the bodies of four women, who had been veiled to the unhallowed gaze of man all their lives, and who in death exposed their bleeding, mutilated nakedness, with garments torn to shreds. Meeting some one I knew, I learnt that the vehicle on which my girl-friend had travelled had been struck, and its inmates killed. So full of horrors was this day, and so bewildered was I, that I paid little heed to this fresh disaster.

Later, in defiance of the Moslem belief that Heaven is not for women, I repeated to myself the pious Turkish wish: "Senin itchün jennettin babi atchik," "For thee the gates of Paradise are open."

On the right Vid bank, between Blasivatz in the south and Opanetz in the north, Osman Pasha's army made its last stand. The tactical formations had been so completely dissolved during the flight across the

plain that no attempt was made to restore them; but the men organised themselves voluntarily into columns and took up a position along the bank, whilst the guns deployed on the slope of the hills. The carts were sent to the rear. The conduct of the officers in making these arrangements, despite the most formidable obstacles, and in the space of fifteen to thirty minutes, deserves the highest praise and admiration.

When dense columns of Russian infantry came within range we were ready for them, and for the last time the clatter of musketry-fire aroused the echoes of the devastated vine-slopes. The death-fight of the Plevna army had barely commenced when I, on my tramp towards the Opanetz bridge—where I hoped to find my battalion—came across a small house, situated on the road between stone bridge and town, three hundred yards east of the former. I had often noticed the house without paying attention to it; only at a later date I learnt that it had originally been the dwelling of the foreman of one of the vineyard properties.* The spot was comparatively deserted: half a dozen carts, whose oxen were dropping with fatigue, a small band of disheartened soldiers, and a surgeon binding up the wounds of some men who had been carried to the roadside. Before the building two Saloniki horsemen stood sentry, dismounted, forbidding entrance to the wounded, who clamoured for admittance. Being dead-beat and hungry to starving-point, I sat down on a stone; and whilst I crunched a biscuit a cart drove up, and a man badly wounded

* The place lived in my memory as dilapidated and almost wrecked, more a shed than a human habitation; but when I revisited it in 1904 it looked cleaner and tidier, and, although deserted, more like a dwelling-house than formerly. I learnt that it had been overhauled and repaired.

in the leg was assisted into the building. So sallow and pain-drawn was his face that at first I failed to recognise Osman. There were tears in his eyes—tears of grief and rage rather than of physical torture—and on his countenance lay that awful expression which says, "The game is up, the end is come," more plainly than words can define it. I rose, and gave to my leader for the last time in the campaign the military salute; for when next I greeted him, in the streets of Kharkoff, we were both prisoners.

Soon Yunuz (badly wounded), Tewfik, Ahmed, and others turned up, with Hassib, the surgeon, and an assistant. A fascination kept me rooted to the spot, for I felt instinctively that a great historical event was to take place within those dilapidated walls. All the time the fight along the river-bank continued without interruption, and the hail of shells came down with unchecked fury. Several fell in proximity of the building. The thunder of the guns, now in terrific crashes, now in a distant growl, was carried over the Bulgarian plains on the wings of the wind, accompanied by sprays of sleet and snow, and it is said that even the Balkan outposts of Mehemed Ali's army "of relief" heard it, whispering to each other that Ghazi Osman was making his last stand. The earth quivered, convulsed by the dying Empire's spasms, and affrighted Nature was in labour with a great event.

Aides-de-camp and orderlies came from all sides. I interrogated several, and their messages were identical: "It is all up; further resistance is impossible; even if we hold the enemy's infantry in check for an hour or two longer, his artillery will simply annihilate us." I heard of the surrender of the troops in Opanetz,

and learnt that the enemy had occupied Plevna and all the abandoned redoubts north, east, and south of the town. Only between Krishin and Blasivatz the brigades of Hussein Vasfi and Sadik Pashas were maintaining their positions.

What passed inside the building was hidden from me; but I learnt later that Osman had obstinately refused to give way to the entreaties of his officers to stop the slaughter by consenting to a capitulation, until the continued arrival of messengers from all sides, imploring for a cessation of hostilities, induced him to give, broken-hearted, the order to hoist a white flag on the roof. Numerous messengers were despatched to stop the firing. *Parlementaires* sent to the Russian general (Ganetzki) commanding the troops that were now coming up from all sides in serried ranks towards the Vid, asked for a capitulation with certain conditions; but Ganetzki demanded unconditional surrender, to which Osman had to agree. Tahir Pasha and General Ganetzki met on the battle-field and concluded the capitulation.

This happened after I had left the neighbourhood. I had been on this spot already twenty minutes, for I was heartily sick of the whole business; that is, twenty minutes too long, for it was my duty to rejoin my battalion whatever the issue might be; so I walked away, with a heavy heart, in the direction of the Opanetz bridge. Soon I was in the midst of the train, which was in a state of terrible confusion, and after a great deal of pushing, dodging, and climbing, I found my battalion, or what remained of it, by the merest accident, much sooner than I had expected, as it had taken up a position along the Grivitza brook, facing north. I reported what I had seen and heard to the

major, and had the honour to take part in the last stand made by the remnant of the Sixth Brigade. The two battalions counted no more than four hundred men between them; my company was reduced to forty men. We stood in serried ranks along the little river; the men were cool and collected, and prepared for either alternative: the order to surrender, or annihilation.

There seemed to be no other troops near us, except groups of officerless, disheartened, bewildered soldiers, many of whom fell down with fatigue, and a confused fragment of the train, into which an officer with bandaged head was vainly trying to get some order. But the view was so confined that only after the surrender I learnt that a body of 500 to 600 men, the remnants of three or four battalions of the First Division, hastily reorganised into a single battalion, had occupied on our left the little triangular peninsula between the rivers Vid and Grivitza at their junction; and that the remnants of six or seven battalions, also of the First Division, had held the north-western slope of the Namazghia hill.

Suddenly three battalions (of the Convoy Brigade) came at a double from behind us, in "fours," and in three parallel columns. They appeared to be as steady as if on the drill ground. With them was a regimental staff and part of the Brigade Staff, but not Said Bey, the Commander of the Convoy Brigade, who, as I learnt later, had made a last stand with the remaining five battalions of his Brigade, near the Vid bridge head (I have already stated that two battalions had been detached in the early morning; these ultimately found their way to Blasivatz and took part in Adil's last fight); and as Pertev Bey (Thirteenth

Regiment) had been wounded earlier in the action, I presume that it was Lieut.-Col. Ali Mehemed Bey (Fourteenth Regiment) under whom I had the honour to fight the last fight in the Plevna Campaign.

I heard his command, "Alaï dur!" (Regiment, halt!), and the leading lieutenant of the right column came to a stop nearly touching me. Then, after a brief pause: "One battalion extend left at two arshins intervals; two battalions extend right at one arshin intervals, two companies on right flank doubled back, facing east"—which orders were executed in a manner that was wholly admirable, considering that every man must have known that the Plevna Army was doomed and the Turkish cause irretrievably lost.

There was at that moment no firing in our neighbourhood; but from behind us came the thunder of battle without respite. No enemy was within my range of vision.

I presume that but a few minutes had elapsed when shouts drew my attention to the right, and I saw three parallel lines of skirmishers descend, one after the other, the Bukova slope, half a mile to the east, and immediately afterwards a large body of infantry, a brigade, I believe, appeared on the sky-line, as if growing out of the soil. My glasses revealed the Roumanian uniforms. The skirmishers opened fire, and the Roumanian advance seemed to come to a stop. I heard the whiz of bullets overhead. The colonel, who was ten paces from me, sang out to some one on his right: "Nine hundred—" and his horse fell like a block. He scrambled up, apparently unhurt, and completed the command: "metres quickfire," and an officer of the Staff galloped away, to transmit the order to the right flank, which had drawn back *en potence.*

The colonel, turning round and perceiving me, shouted: "How many battalions have you here?" but before I could reply my major galloped up and reported. Suddenly I perceived a commotion; my men pointed ahead, and I saw first some cavalry, then a thin line of skirmishers, and finally a dense body of infantry come in sight on the Opanetz hill, just east of our former Opanetz redoubt. My glasses showed glimpses of the brilliant red uniforms of the Rossiori (the Roumanian Hussars) under half-open great coats. And then my glasses showed something else: five or six batteries galloping from the farther slope into the skyline and unlimbering on the top of the hill.

"Company volleys on the artillery—eight hundred metres," sang out my major to the four company commanders of my battalion, and that was the last battle-order I received in the Plevna Campaign.

Meanwhile the quickfire in our right flank had commenced.

"Company—on the guns, eight hundred metres—volleys—ready—fire!" that was the last battle order which I gave in the Plevna Campaign.

The next thing I saw was that Major Taki, who had ridden away to the linked battalion, suddenly disappeared—he had fallen from his horse. I saw the plunging and rearing animal, and men dragging it away from some prostrate figure. Some one else had seen this: the senior captain of my battalion, who earlier in the day, with a view to latent possibilities, had ascertained that he was senior to any officer in the linked battalion. He looked quickly round, spied a broken-down cart, ran to it, climbed it, and shouted: "Both battalions will execute my orders!" But his joy was short-lived. At that moment I heard shouts

behind me, turned and saw a lieutenant of the Saloniki regiment ride up *ventre à terre*, waving a sword, to the point of which a white handkerchief had been fastened. "Cease fire!" cried a score of voices, and presently a whole multitude shouted it, and buglers sounded, unbidden, that welcome call. We did cease, only too glad to do so, and so did, two or three minutes later, the enemy. The time must have been about 3.30 p.m.; dusk was just setting in. I presume that barely twenty minutes had elapsed from the arrival of the Convoy battalions to the cessation of fire. Immediately afterwards the cannonade in the south ceased all of a sudden, and the last shot in the Plevna campaign had been fired.

Later I ascertained that Tahir Pasha, who had taken command when Osman had been wounded, had detached these three battalions from the Convoy Brigade (which retained its good order and *morale* till the last), on hearing that Edhem's six battalions had surrendered, that the Opanetz hills were in Roumanian hands, and that our right flank was bared, being, indeed, held only by three weak battalions: mine, the linked battalion, and the scratch battalion mentioned above.

We waved whatever we had of white rags in our possession, the men laid down their rifles, and we all sat or squatted on the ground, slush notwithstanding, dead-beat. Many fell asleep, and went with closed eyes through the ceremony of surrender. I was so bewildered and so tired that I hardly knew whether to rejoice at the cessation of a useless slaughter or to mourn over the defeat. I resigned myself to the inevitable, and deferred all the bitterness of reflection to a more convenient period of leisure. And thus ended the last of the four battles of Plevna, of which

three had been victorious, and the fourth a defeat certainly, and far-reaching in its consequences, but as honourable a defeat as any ever sustained by the bravest army.

The course of the action is so clear in its outlines and so devoid of complications that only a few words need be added.

It was an hour or so before midnight on the 9th that the Russians had already discovered Bash Tabiya and some of the central redoubts to be abandoned, and had occupied them. After daybreak the Krishin redoubts and those on the Janik Bair were occupied, and detachments entered the town.

The tremendous rush of the First Division, led by Osman in person, attended by every officer of his Staff, all dismounted, had been uniformly successful; the front line of the hostile entrenchments had been seized, with twelve guns and some hundreds of unwounded prisoners. But here Todleben's magnificent dispositions were brought into play. An elaborate sytem for sending reinforcements to any given point of the line of investment from any other given point or points had been not only organised, but tried and rehearsed, with the result that the Russian leaders knew to a battalion, and within a fraction of an hour, what forces could be sent, and whence, and in what time, to any attacked portion of the circle. In each section several brigades were kept constantly ready to assist any other section.

The camp-wire flashed the news that the Turks had attacked Katalei's and Ganetzki's corps to every portion of the army of investment, and from Skobeleff's detachment, as well as from the Roumanian section, strong reinforcements started to aid the Guards and the

Grenadiers, whilst elsewhere columns were organised. The Russian counter-attack threw confusion into the Turkish ranks. Osman was grievously wounded in the leg by a shell-splinter, and Tahir took the command. The latter, though he did, undoubtedly, all that lay within the limits of possibility, was not able to maintain the conquered positions. The troops, seeing no longer their beloved leader, who had headed the first assault, sword and revolver in hand, became demoralised; Tahir, himself slightly wounded, had suffered in reputation by the incident during the third battle which I have related, and Adil, the most trusted leader after Osman, was still on the right bank of the Vid, where the Fourth and Fifth Brigades, intended to protect the left flank and the rear, were so hotly engaged that the original scheme, by which they were to come to the aid of the First Division, could not be executed. The crazy flight across the Vid plain was the result, which, but for Pertev's battalions, would have terminated, there and then, in the annihilation of the army. At all points the Turks retreated across the river, and on the other side they made their last stand, in the following positions :—

Of the twenty-four battalions of the First Division, three or four at junction of Vid and Grivitza, six or seven on the Namazghia hill, the remainder, thirteen to fifteen, on right Vid bank between Blasivatz and Vid bridge. The Fourth and Fifth Brigades between Krishin and Disevitza. Two battalions of the Sixth Brigade on the bank of the Grivitza; six battalions had surrendered. Of the Convoy Brigade, three battalions on Grivitza bank; five battalions between Vid bridge and Middle bridge; two battalions at Blasivatz. The whole of the artillery of the First Division, as well as the

Convoy Brigade Artillery, and the Reserve Artillery, fifty-two guns in all, took up, after the retreat, positions on the hill on which our Vid bridge redoubt stood, and for an hour inflicted considerable punishment on the advancing Russian Guards and Grenadiers, being in good order till the last. The twenty-four guns of the Fourth and Fifth Brigades were in their original positions until the end; one battery of the Sixth Brigade had surrendered with Edhem; I do not know what became of the other, which had been attached to the First Division in the early morning.

Meanwhile the Roumanians had brought about the surrender of the Sixth Brigade. Thus the right Turkish flank was bared. The confusion, caused principally by the cumbersome train, was so great, and the exhaustion of the men so complete, that further resistance was impossible. Reinforcements reached the Russian lines from all points; the narrow confines of the locality which harboured the dense and disorderly crowd of the Turkish army became the focus of a terrible artillery-fire, which in another hour would have annihilated the remnants of the force, and nothing was left to Osman but to capitulate. Conditions having been refused, he had to surrender *à merci*.

The Russians state their losses at 2100 in killed and wounded, of which figure 1700 fell upon Ganetzki's Corps of Grenadiers. The Roumanian casualties were trifling. The Turkish losses cannot have been less than 5000 (say 1500 killed and 3500 wounded), of which, roughly, 3000 fell in the First Division, 1500 in the Second (of which 1000 on the Fourth and Fifth Brigades, 350 on my and the linked battalion, and barely 50 on Edhem's Brigade), and 500 in train and convoy; 200 peaceful inhabitants, mostly women and children,

were reported to have been killed or wounded; and the Bulgarians massacred at least 500 invalids, convalescents, and residents. Thus the action of the 10th killed or disabled, directly or indirectly, nearly 8000 human beings.

On the part of the Russians and Roumanians, 80,000 to 90,000 men had been actually engaged, or thrice the number of the Turkish combatants.

Edhem Pasha's six battalions did not behave well, as I have said; which is all the more astonishing as Edhem had repeatedly proved himself to be a brave and capable man, and as Colonel Suleiman Bey, who led four of the battalions (the Twelfth Regiment), had throughout the campaign, as commander of the Opanetz redoubts, won for himself the esteem and confidence of the whole army. In fact, it used to be a common saying among the soldiers that his tabiyas were the best-managed works in camp.

With this exception the conduct of the Plevna army in the last sortie is deserving of the highest praise.

The fourth battle of Plevna proves that the Ottoman infantry, when wrought to the proper pitch, can excel also in offensive movements. That stupendous charge of the First Division would have made a mark in military history, even if Osman's army had never done anything else; it alone would have placed Ghazi Osman among the world's immortals.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SURRENDER, AND CONCLUSION

December 10, 1877, *to March*, 1878

TWENTY weeks of campaigning had reduced my battalion to ten officers and 200 men, in lieu of the original nineteen officers and 650 men, and my company to one officer and forty men, in lieu of the original five officers and 175 men. Our linked battalion mustered only 150 men. These were the numbers that surrendered to a sympathetic and courteous Roumanian colonel on December 10, while the dusk, sullen and threatening, closed over the fall of Plevna.

My major had received an ugly wound a minute before we laid down arms, and was taken away by a Roumanian cart. My former captain had been wounded, earlier in the day, in the Russian entrenchments, and had fallen into the enemy's hands when the battalion retreated. I have not seen either since. Bakal had a bruised leg caused by a fall, but he disdainfully declined surgical aid.

Osman was visited in his shed, on the evening of the 10th, by Generals Ganetzki, Katalei, and Tchernat. A carriage was sent for him, and he was transferred to Plevna. On the road thither he met the Grand Duke

Nicholas and the Prince of Roumania. The former complimented him on his magnificent defence. With the rebel Prince Osman refused to shake hands. The officers cheered, and the soldiers presented arms. On the following day Osman was introduced to the Czar, who uttered the words which have become historic, and which the opinion of the world has heartily endorsed :

" Je vous félicite de votre belle défense. C'est un des plus beaux faits de l'histoire militaire."

The same afternoon Osman, escorted by a guard of honour composed of Cossacks and Rossiori, was transferred to Bogot, where he stayed in a tent for a fortnight, tended by Hassib, his late surgeon-in-chief, a German doctor, and some Sisters of the Red Cross. Thence he was sent, *via* Sistova and Bukarest, to Kharkoff, where he remained until his liberation in March, 1878. Throughout his captivity he was treated with a chivalry and a magnanimity which form a glaring contrast to the terrible sufferings the common soldiers had to undergo before reaching their destinations. In Kharkoff the Hero of Plevna received royal honours, and was lionised by the best society.

The scenes which transpired in Plevna town on the 10th and 11th surpass comprehension. I have heard from eye-witnesses of things which make one's blood boil. The Bulgarians acted like savages and maniacs, and it is awful to reflect that they committed massacres, pillage, and nameless crimes to celebrate the victory of Christianity over Islam.

Thus was accomplished the fall of Plevna, after a defence which had lasted 143 days. Of this period, sixty-three days were spent in rigid investment, viz. sixteen days the initial investment, commencing with

September 8 and ending with the 24th, and forty-seven days the investment proper, from October 24 till the final sortie. The period embraces three great battles (those of July 30, September 11 and 12, and December 10), four actions of second magnitude (Plevna, July 20 ; Pelishat, August 31 ; Lovdcha, September 3 ; Gorna Dubnik, October 24), and twenty minor engagements, not counting numerous skirmishes ; thus there was, on an average, an action every five days.

The struggle for Plevna cannot have cost the Russians less than 55,000 men, the Roumanians 10,000, the Turks 30,000, in dead and disabled, inclusive of deaths from illness ; comprising also the 8000 to 9000 prisoners who succumbed to exposure, starvation, or disease before reaching Russian soil. If we include the victims among the peaceful inhabitants, the total cost of the fight for Plevna in life and limb would not fall far short of 100,000 human beings. Of this number, at least 40,000 died outright or succumbed subsequently to injuries, privations, or illness ; 20,000 alone were killed in action ; and in the neighbourhood of Plevna not less than 30,000 victims of an Emperor's folly sleep their last sleep.

From first to last, including all losses, and in round numbers, the Russians had placed 250,000 men (inclusive of Roumanians) and 700 guns in the field for the conquest of Plevna, the Turks 60,000 men and 100 guns for its defence.

But if the struggle for Plevna is full to repletion of horrors, the like of which I trust the reader will never dream of, much less witness in their awful reality, it is also rich in features which lay bare all that is most beautiful and most noble in human nature. Even if no moral, whether strategical or tactical, historical or

political, could be drawn from it, even if it could not form the basis for a whole superstructure of conjectures for the future, it shows the sublime grandeur to which men can rise who fight (or imagine they fight) for a righteous cause. It is not my province to point out lessons, to draw conclusions, or to base prophecies on accomplished facts ; but I may be permitted to utter the warning, embodied not only in the defence of Plevna, but in the whole Russo-Turkish War, the admonition expressed in the Turkish proverb : " Düshmen karinjé issé fil ghibi zan eilé," *i.e.* " Though an enemy be an ant, imagine he were an elephant."

With the incidents of my captivity I could fill a volume of respectable size. Some of my adventures were exceedingly pleasant (I did more love-making in those three months than in the remaining years of my life) ; others, in the commencement, of a nature to make me shudder even now, with nearly four decades intervening. But that is another story.

Of Osman's army, which at the time of its greatest strength counted 48,000 men, only 15,000 reached Russian soil, only 12,000 returned to their homes. I have it from a reliable Turkish source that in 1898 only 6000 Plevna veterans were alive. To-day (1911) the number is probably less than a hundred. This is explained by the fact that a large proportion of Osman's heroes were already in 1877 middle-aged reservists.

As regards myself, so hardened had the privations of the campaign rendered me, that since a brief indisposition in Bukarest I have not had a day's illness, with the exception of yellow fever in Rio de Janeiro and enteric in South Africa. I have never had as much as a serious cold. The effects of the brutal propensities developed in warfare and the moral and intellectual

deterioration which is an unavoidable concomitant of such a war as this, wore off speedily, thanks to many an earnest prayer: for I was intelligent enough, and educated enough, to perceive the danger, and to seek aid where aid can be obtained. *Laborare et orare* have cured ills worse than mine.

* * * *

April 3, 1878.

From the moment when I had bidden farewell, on leaving home, to those who loved me, never a tear had dimmed my eyes: not throughout the unspeakable sufferings I had witnessed; not when my comrades in joys and sorrows dropped out of the ranks one after the other; not when hearts stouter than mine faltered in the despair of a hopeless situation; not when bitter fate denied me the leisure of a second to grasp the hand, stiffening in death, of my fallen friend; not when our last appeal to arms failed, and the man of iron, the godlike hero himself, was frantic with grief and rage; not when, in the silent, snowclad plains, fellow-travellers, one by one, sank into death's frozen embrace, and closed, gratefully, their weary eyes for ever. But when the landmarks dear to my childhood appeared by the side of the iron track; when familiar roads and fields passed me in a whirling procession; when steeples and streets, never forgotten, however unlovely, started out of the haze of a peaceful April sunset, like ghosts out of the golden past, to the music, indescribably sweet to my hearing, of the brake grinding against the wheels; when at last I saw her on the platform who had waited for my homecoming through a weary year of pain, with patience and never-ending trust in

God, as only the woman who loves can watch and wait; when I beheld those dear eyes scanning wistfully the long chain of clattering cars—then all the pent-up passion of months of nameless horrors burst the barriers of restraint, and, blinded with tears, with my heart throbbing as if it would rend my breast asunder, I rushed into the arms that were stretched out to receive me—my mother's. In a mad freak I had left her, insolent of youth and conscious of strength; and I came back longing, praying for, hardly daring hope for her love. But love never dies. I heard her cry of joy, I felt the sob that shook her frame, I asked for no more than to rest where I was: for I had reached at last my home.

FINIS

APPENDIX

*ORDRES DE BATAILLE, ETC.**

Chapter III. Page 81.

Ordre de Bataille of the Corps leaving Widdin for the Relief of Nikopoli on July 13, 1877.

Commander: Mushir Osman Pasha.
Chief-of-Staff: Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
Staff: Col. Tewfik Bey; Lieut.-Col. Hairi Bey.
Principal Aide-de-Camp: Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
Commander of Artillery: Col. Ahmed Bey.
Commander of Cavalry: Col. Osman Bey.
Surgeon-in-Chief: Col. Hassib Bey.

First Division.

Commander: General of Division Adil Pasha.
First Brigade: Brigadier Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.
First Regiment: Col. Emin Bey.
1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Nizamié.
Second Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Husni Bey.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Redif.
Second Brigade: Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.
Third Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Bey.
3 battalions infantry Redif.

* The numbering of regiments is mine; the numbering of divisions and brigades is the original Turkish numbering.

Fourth Regiment : Major Kazim.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Redif.
2 batteries field artillery (6 lb.).
2 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.

Second Division.

Commander : Brigadier Hassan Sabri Pasha.
Third Brigade : Col. Said Bey.
Fifth Regiment : Col. Yunuz Bey.
1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Nizamié.
Sixth Regiment : Major Issa.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
3 battalions infantry Redif.
1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).
1 squadron cavalry Nizamié.

Corps Artillery.

Col. Ahmed Bey.
3 batteries field artillery (6 lb.).
2 batteries horse artillery (4 lb.).
1 battery mountain artillery (3 lb.).

Corps Cavalry.

Col. Osman Bey.
3 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.
200 irregular cavalry.

Engineers.

1 company.

Total : 19 battalions, 9 batteries, 6 squadrons, 200 irregular cavalry, 1 company engineers ; or, 12,000 men with 54 guns.

CHAPTER IV. PAGE 92.

The *Order de Bataille* for July 19 was the same as that given with Chapter III., with the addition of a brigade formed of the three battalions which had joined us in Keniéja and the three we had found in Plevna, as follows :

Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.
Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.
2 battalions infantry Nizamié.
1 battalion infantry Redif.
Eighth Regiment : Col. Hamdi Bey.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Redif.

CHAPTER VI. PAGE 137.

Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army, July 29, 1877.

Commander : Mushir Osman Pasha.
Chief of Staff : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
Staff : Lieut.-Col. Hairi Bey ; Lieut.-Col. Raif Bey.
Principal Aide-de-Camp : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
Commander of Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.
Commander of Artillery : Col. Ahmed Bey.
Surgeon-in-Chief : Col. Hassib Bey.

First Division.

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.
First Brigade : Col. Emin Bey.
First Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.
1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Nizamié.
Second Regiment : Col. Omer Bey.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Redif.
1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).
1 battery horse artillery (4 lb.).

Second Brigade : Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.
Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Bey.
3 battalions infantry Redif.
Fourth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Suleiman Bey.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Redif.
1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).
2 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.
100 irregular cavalry.

Second Division.

Commander : Brigadier Hassan Sabri Pasha.
Third Brigade : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
Fifth Regiment : Col. Yunuz Bey.
1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Nizamié.
Sixth Regiment : Col. Said Bey.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Redif.
1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).
1 battery mountain artillery (3 lb.).
Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.
Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.
2 battalions infantry Nizamié.
1 battalion infantry Redif.
Eighth Regiment : Col. Hamdi Bey.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
2 battalions infantry Redif.
1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).
2 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.
100 irregular cavalry.

Reserve.

Commander : Brigadier Sadik Pasha.
Adjutant : Lieut.-Col. Adbullah Bey.
Infantry : Lieut.-Col. Hairi Bey.
2 battalions Nizamié.
7 battalions Redif.

Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.
2 squadrons Nizamié.
2 squadrons Ottoman Cossacks.
200 irregulars.
Artillery : Col. Ahmed Bey.
2 batteries (6 lb.).
2 sections (4 guns) (6 lb.).
1 battery horse (4 lb.).
Engineers : 1 company.

Total in Plevna :—33 battalions, 9½ batteries, 8 squadrons, 400 irregular cavalry, 1 company engineers ; or, 20,000 men with 57 guns.

Garrison of Lovdcha.

Commander : Brigadier Rifa'at Pasha.
Adjutant : Col. Tewfik Bey.
1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.
1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
4 battalions infantry Redif.
1 battery (6 lb.).
100 irregular cavalry.

Total of Plevna Army, including Lovdcha Garrison :—39 battalions, 10½ batteries, 8 squadrons, 500 irregular cavalry, 1 company engineers ; or, 24,000 men with 63 guns.

Garrisons along the Roumanian and Servian Frontiers.

Commander : Brigadier Mehemed Isset Pasha (Widdin).
Widdin : 12 battalions, 1 squadron, 1 field battery, 500 heavy fort guns.
North-Western Frontier : 4 battalions.
Lom Palankah : 3 battalions, 30 fort guns.
Rahova and Beshti : 5 battalions, 20 fort guns.

Total: 24 battalions, 1 battery, 1 squadron, 550 heavy fort guns; or, 16,000 men.

Total of West Bulgarian Army, under Osman Pasha's Command:—63 battalions, 11½ batteries, 9 squadrons; or 40,000 men with 69 guns (and 550 heavy fort guns).

The Commanders of the positions around Plevna were:—

Vid bridge: Major Kazim.
Opanetz redoubts: Lieut.-Col. Suleiman Bey.
Bukova redoubts: Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.
Janik Bair redoubts: Col. Emin Bey.
Bash Tabiyas: Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.
Headquarters batteries: Col. Ahmed Bey.
Two large redoubts south of the Bulgareni road and east of headquarters hill: Brigadier Tahir Pasha, Brigadier Atouf Pasha.
"Green Hill" redoubt: Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.
Redoubt on the Krishin road: Col. Yunuz Bey.
Plevna (town): Major Moussa.

Chapter VIII. Page 183.

Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army, September 6, 1877.

Commander: Mushir Osman Pasha.
Chief-of-Staff: Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
Staff: Brigadier Sadik Pasha; Colonels Hamdi Bey, Hairi Bey; Lieut.-Colonels Raif Bey, Abdullah Bey.
Principal Aide-de-Camp: Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
Commander of Cavalry: Col. Osman Bey.
Commander of Artillery: Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.
Surgeon-in-chief: Col. Hassib Bey.
(Each regiment consists of three battalions.)

First Division.

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.
First Brigade : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.
First Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.
Second Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Bey.
Second Brigade : Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.
Third Regiment : Col. Hafouz Bey.
Fourth Regiment : Col. Suleiman Bey.
2 squadrons regular cavalry and a detachment Circassians.
4 batteries @ 6 guns.

Second Division.

Commander : General of Division Hassan Sabri Pasha.
Third Brigade : Col. Tewfik Bey.
Fifth Regiment :
Sixth Regiment : Col. Said Bey.
Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.
Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.
Eighth Regiment : Col. Omer Bey.
2 squadrons regular cavalry and a detachment Circassians.
3 batteries @ 6 guns.

Third Division.

Commander : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
Fifth Brigade : Lieut.-Col. Riza Bey.
Ninth Regiment :
Tenth Regiment : Major Issa.
Sixth Brigade : Col. Yunuz Bey.
Eleventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ali Riza Bey.
Twelfth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
2 squadrons regular cavalry and a detachment Circassians.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Reserves.

Commander: Brigadier Rifa'at Pasha.
Infantry: Brigadier Emin Pasha.
10 battalions.
Cavalry: Col. Osman Bey.
1 squadron regular cavalry (escort to headquarters).
2 squadrons Ottoman Cossacks.
10 squadrons Saloniki auxiliaries.
1 detachment Circassians.
Artillery: Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.
3 batteries @ 6 guns.
1 company engineers.

Total: 46 battalions infantry, 19 squadrons cavalry, 500 Circassians, 12 batteries, 1 company engineers; or, 30,000 men with 72 guns.

Summary of the Forces under Osman Pasha's Command.

	Battls.	Sqds.	Batts.
Plevna Corps: Osman Pasha	46	19	12
North-Western Corps: Mehemed Isset Pasha (Widdin):—			
Widdin (Battals. 12, Squads. 1, Batts. 1)			
Along the North-Western Frontiers (4)			
Lom Palankah (3)			
Rahova (5)			
	24	1	1
Balkan Corps: Chefket Pasha (Orkanye).			
Orkanyé (6, 1, 2)			
Kormatzi and Tashkessen (12, 1, 1)			
Etropol (4)			
Sofia (6, 0, 2)			
	28	2	5
Reinforcement Column concentrating in Orkanyé under Ahmed Hifzi Pasha	17	6	2
Total of Forces under Osman's command	115	28	20

Chapter VIII. Page 183.

List of the Fortifications and Positions, with their Commanders and Garrisons, on September 6, 1877.

The footnotes give the literal translations of the names, where these are not the names of men or places.

	Battals.	Guns.
Left Wing.		
Opanetz redoubts : Suleiman Bey	2	6
Bukova redoubts : Mehemed Nazif Bey	4	3
Janik Bair redoubt (west) : Adil Pasha	3	6
Janik Bair redoubt (east) : Edhem Pasha	2	3
Bash Tabiya * : Hafouz Bey	2	4
Kanli Tabiya † : Kara Ali Pasha	1	2
Totals	14	24
Centre.		
Atouf Tabiya : Atouf Pasha	2	4
Araba Tabiya ‡ : Tewfik Bey	3	4
Omer Tabiya : Omer Bey	3	2
Ibrahim Tabiya : Ibrahim Bey	2	4
Chorum § Tabiya	2	4
Totals	12	18
Right Wing.		
Tahir Tabiya : Tahir Pasha	3	4
Issa Tabiya : Major Issa	1	—
Kavanlik Tabiya : Riza Bey	1	2
Yunuz Tabiya : Yunuz Bey	2	3
Talahat Tabiya : Talahat Bey	1	3
Milas Tabiya ‖ : Ali Riza Bey	1	—
Baghlarbashi ** Tabiya : Major Rassim	1	—
Totals	10	12

* Head Battery. † Bloody Battery. ‡ Cart Battery.
§ Probably an abbreviation of Chopchorum, rubbish heap.
‖ Probably a Turkish corruption of the Arabic Melaz, refuge.
** Top of the vineyards.

Reserve.

	Battals.	Guns.
Ikhtihat Tabiya * : Rifa'at Pasha . .	3	6
Headquarters Hill : Ahmed Pasha . .	4	6
In Plevna	2	—
Vid bridge : Major Kazim	1	6
Totals	10	18

Summary.

	Battals.	Guns.	Sqds.
Left wing, or First Division : Adil Pasha	14	24	2
Centre, or Second Division : Hassan Sabri Pasha	12	18	2
Right wing, or Third Division : Tahir Pasha	10	12	2
Reserve : Rifa'at Pasha . . .	10	18	13
Totals	46	72	19

CHAPTER X. PAGE 249.

Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army between October 8 and 24, 1877.

Commander : Mushir Ghazi Osman Pasha.
Chief-of-Staff : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
Staff : Brigadiers Emin Pasha, Hussein Vasfi Pasha ; Colonels Hamdi Bey, Hairi Bey ; Lieut.-Cols. Mehemed Nazif Bey, Mehemed Bey.
Principal Aide-de-Camp : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
Commander of Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.
Commander of Artillery : Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.
Commander of Engineers : Lieut.-Col. Tiflik Bey.
Commander of Headquarters : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.

* Reserve Battery.

Commandant of Plevna (town) : Lieut.-Col. Hussein Bey.
Surgeon-in-Chief : Col. Hassib Bey.

First Division.

(North front, from Opanetz to Bash Tabiya.)
Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.

	Battalions.
First Brigade : Brigadier Sadik Pasha.	
First Regiment : Col. Hafouz Bey . .	3
Second Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Latif Bey .	3
Second Brigade : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.	
Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Kazim Bey .	3
Fourth Regiment : Col. Hairi Bey .	3
Third Brigade : Col. Suleiman Bey.	
Fifth Regiment	3
Sixth Regiment	3
	18

Second Division.

(South-East Front, from Ibrahim Tabiya to the Tultchenitza Valley.)
Commander : General of Division Hassan Sabri Pasha (convalescent).—Brigadier Atouf Pasha (acting).

	Battalions.
Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.	
Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Raif Bey .	3
Eighth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Eyub Bey .	3
Fifth Brigade : Col. Omer Bey.	
Ninth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Natou Bey .	3
Tenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Zini Bey .	3
	12

Third Division.

South and West Fronts, from the Tultchenitza to the Vid bridge.)
Commander : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

	Battalions.
Sixth Brigade : Brigadier Omer Tafir Pasha.	
Eleventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Pertev Bey	3
Twelfth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Abdullah Bey	3
Seventh Brigade : Col. Yunuz Bey.	
Thirteenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Tahir Bey	3
Fourteenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey	3
Eighth Brigade : Col. Said Bey.	
Fifteenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ali Mehemed Bey	3
Sixteenth Regiment	2
	17

Fourth Division.

(Orkanyé Road, from Dolna Dubnik to Telish.)

Commander : General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

Ninth Brigade : Brigadier Haki Pasha.	Battalions.
Seventeenth Regiment	3
Eighteenth Regiment	3
Tenth Brigade : General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.	
Nineteenth Regiment : Col. Veli Bey	5
Twentieth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Isset Bey	6
	17

Fifth Division.

(Reserves : in Araba and Ikhtihat Tabiyas and in Plevna town.)

Commander : Brigadier Tewfik Pasha.

	Battalions
Eleventh Brigade : Brigadier Hussein Vasfi Pasha.	
Twenty-first Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Hurshid Bey	5
Twenty-second Regiment	5

Battalions.

Twelfth Brigade: Brigadier Emin Pasha (convalescent).—Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey (acting).

Twenty-third Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey 5

Twenty-fourth Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Rassim Bey 5

20

Summary of Infantry.

First Division: Adil Pasha (north front) . . 18

Second Division: Hassan Sabri Pasha (south-east front) 12

Third Division: Tahir Pasha (south and west fronts 17

Fourth Division: Ahmed Hifzi Pasha (Orkanyé road) 17

Fifth Division: Tewfik Pasha (Reserves) . . 20

84

Cavalry.

Commander: Col. Osman Bey.

Regular cavalry: Col. Bekir Bey.

13 squadrons (2 regiments) cavalry Nizamié.

2 squadrons Ottoman Cossacks.

Auxiliary cavalry: Lieut.-Cols. Chefki Bey and Haki Bey.

10 squadrons (1 regiment) Saloniki auxiliaries.

1000 Circassians, formed into two regiments of 6 squadrons each.

Artillery.

Commander: Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.

9 batteries @ 6 guns field artillery (6 lb.)

4 „ 6 „ horse artillery (4 lb.)

3 „ 6 „ mountain artillery (3 lb.)

Total, 96 guns.

Engineers.

3 companies : Lieut.-Col. Tiflik Bey.

Volunteer Guard to Headquarters.

1 battalion Volunteers of the Ottoman Union (foot)	Lieut.-Col. Mehemed
1 squadron Volunteers of Vodena (mounted)	Nazif Bey.

Foreign Surgeons (this list is compiled from memory): German : Lange, Schmitz, Kuhle. English : Ryan, Crossby, Wilson. French : Pain. Swiss : Robert (or Raubert). Austrian : Ollis. Also, 10 or 12 Austrian Jewish Surgeons (Poles and Hungarians).*

Total of Plevna Army.

Infantry : 84 battalions . . .	38,000
Cavalry : 25 squadrons . . .	2,000
Circassians : 12 squadrons . . .	1,000
Artillery : 16 batteries	2,000
Engineers : 3 companies . . .	200
Volunteers : 1 battalion and 1 squadron	800
Convalescents and non-combatants .	4,000
	48,000

List of Redoubts and Positions occupied by the Plevna Army end of October, 1877, with their Infantry Garrisons and Commanders.

First Division.—North Front.

Opanetz redoubts	6 battalions	Suleiman Bey.
Bukova redoubts	3 ,,	Kazim Bey.
Yeni Tabiya †	2 ,,	Hairi Bey.

* I have not learned the names of these gentlemen, as they were called by nicknames, such as Blackbeard, Bignose, etc. These Jewish doctors were clever and skilful, and most of them also extraordinarily brave and intrepid. Doctors Schmitz, Kuhle, and Robert (Raubert) were killed, and six of the Jewish surgeons were seriously wounded, in the last sortie.

† New Battery.

Janik Bair redoubt west	3 „	Edhem Pasha.
Janik Bair redoubt east	2 „	Latif Bey.
Bash Tabiya	2 „	Hafouz Bey.

Second Division.—South-East Front.

Chorum Tabiya	1 battalion	
Ibrahim Tabiya	2 battalions	Raif Bey.
Atouf Tabiya	3 „	Atouf Pasha.
Omer Tabiya	3 „	Omer Bey.
Tahir Tabiya	3 „	Natou Bey.

Third Division.—South and West Fronts.

Issa Tabiya Kavanlik Tabiya Baghlarbashi Tabiya	1 battalion.	
Milas Tabiya	1 „	Abdullah Bey.
Talahat Tabiya	1 „	Talahat Bey.
Yunuz Tabiya	2 battalions	Yunuz Bey.
Kütchük Tabiya *	1 battalion	
Haji Baba † Tabiya	1 „	Ali Mehemed Bey.
Ghazi Osman Tabiya	1 „	Tahir Bey.
Brestovitz redoubt	1 „	
Ternina road redoubt	1 „	
Baghché Tabiya ‡	1 „	
Pertev Tabiya	2 battalions	Pertev Bey.
Blasivatz redoubt No. 1 „ „ No. 2	1 battalion.	
Vid bridge redoubt	2 battalions	Said Bey.
Namazghia § Tabiya (south) „ „ (north)	1 battalion.	

Fourth Division.—Orkanyé Road.

Dolna Dubnik	5 battalions	Veli Bey.
Gorna Dubnik	6 „	Ahmed Hifzi Pasha. Second: Isset Bey.
Telish	6 „	Haki Pasha.

* Little Battery. † Father Pilgrim.
‡ Garden Battery. The Russian writers have erroneously called Baghlarbashi by this name. § Place of prayer.

Fifth Division.—Reserves.

Araba Tabiya	5 battalions	Hussein Vasfi Pasha.
Ikhtihat Tabiya	5 ,,	Tewfik Pasha.
Headquarters	1 battalion	Mehemed Nazif Bey.
Plevna (town)	5 battalions	Hussein Bey.
Between town and Vid bridge	5 ,,	Rassim Bey.

CHAPTER XII. PAGE 306.

Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army for the Sortie of December 10, 1877.

Commander: Mushir Ghazi Osman Pasha.
Chief-of-Staff: Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
Staff: Cols. Veli Bey, Hairi Bey; Lieut.-Col. Tahir Bey.
Principal Aide-de-Camp: Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
Commander of Artillery: Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.
Commander of Cavalry: Colonel Bekir Bey.
Commander of Train and Convoy: Col. Said Bey.
Surgeon-in-Chief: Col. Hassib Bey

First Division.

Commander: Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
First Brigade: Brigadier Atouf Pasha.
First Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Raif Bey.
4 battalions.
Second Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Eyub Bey.
4 battalions.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.
Second Brigade: Col. Yunuz Bey.
Third Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Zini Bey.
4 battalions.

Fourth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Abdullah Bey.
4 battalions.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Third Brigade : Brigadier Tewfik Pasha.
Fifth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.
4 battalions.
Sixth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Rassim Bey.
4 battalions.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.

1 regiment (5 squadrons) cavalry Nizamié : Lieut.-Col. Chefki Bey.

Second Division.

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.
Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Hussein Vasfi Pasha.
Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Natou Bey.
4 battalions.
Eighth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Hurshid Bey.
4 battalions.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Fifth Brigade : Brigadier Sadik Pasha.
Ninth Regiment : Col. Hafouz Bey.
4 battalions.
Tenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Latif Bey.
4 battalions.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Sixth Brigade : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.
Eleventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Kazim Bey.
4 battalions.
Twelfth Regiment : Col. Suleiman Bey.
4 battalions.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.

1 regiment (4 squadrons) cavalry Nizamié } Lieut.-Col.
½ regiment (5 squadrons) Saloniki auxiliaries } Haki Bey.

Convoy Brigade.

Seventh Brigade : Col. Said Bey.
Thirteenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Pertev Bey.
5 battalions.
Fourteenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ali Mehemed Bey.
5 battalions.
2 batteries @ 6 guns.
2 squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks.
1 squadron mounted volunteers of Vodena.

Corps Cavalry.

½ regiment (5 squadrons) Saloniki auxiliaries } Colonel
2 squadrons Circassians } Bekir Bey.

Reserve Artillery.

1 battery, 4 guns (6 lb.).

Engineers.

3 companies : Lieut.-Col. Tiflik Bey.

Escort to Headquarters.

1 battalion volunteers of the Ottoman Union.

Summary.

Infantry : 58 battalions		22,000
Cavalry : 9 squadrons regulars		1,500
2 „ Ottoman Cossacks		
10 „ Saloniki auxiliaries		
2 „ Circassians (200)		
1 „ mounted volunteers of Vodena		
Artillery : 14 batteries @ 6 guns	Total :	1,500
1 battery @ 4 guns	88 guns	
Engineers : 3 companies		9,000
Escort to Headquarters : 1 battalion		
Non-combatants, convalescents, and wounded		
Total		34,000

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